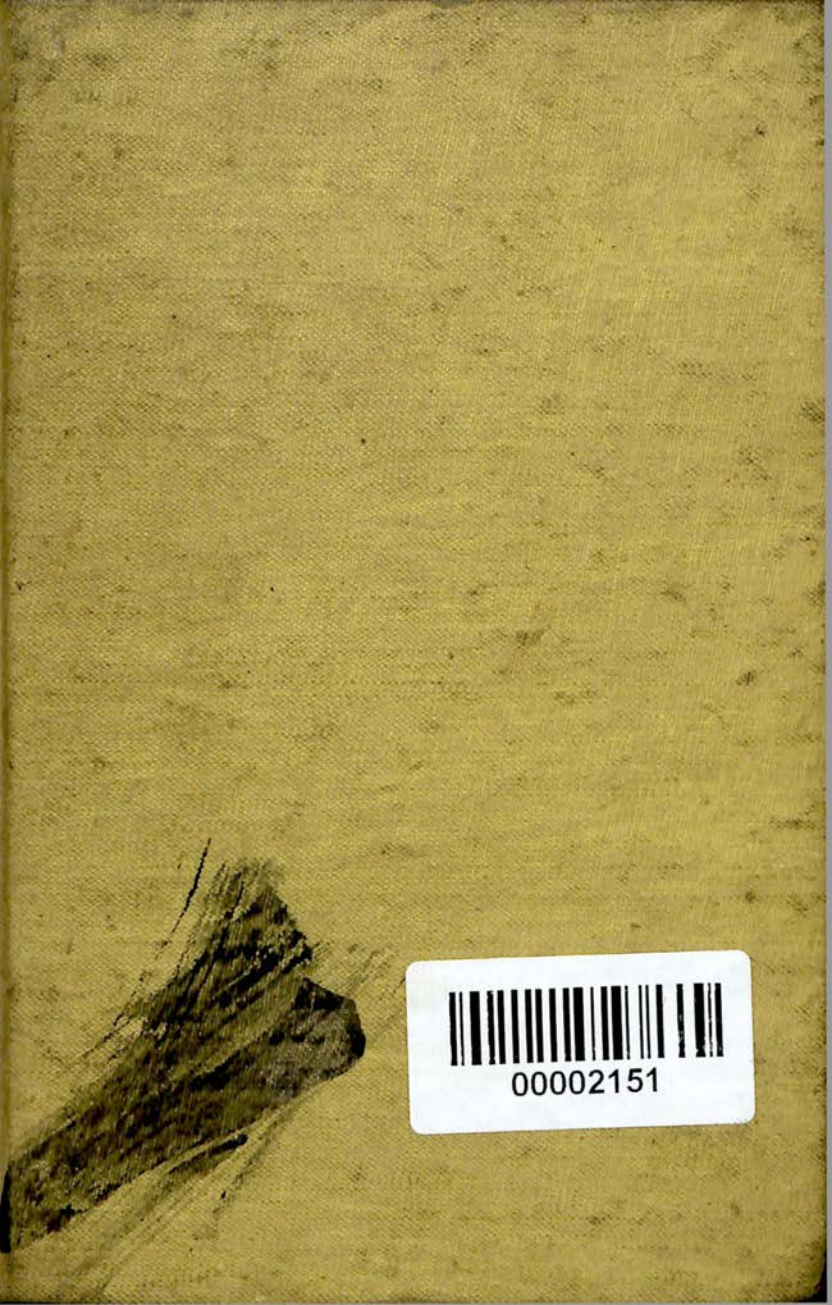
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ENGLISH LANDS LETTERS AND KINGS

From Celt to Tudor

BY

DONALD G. MITCHELL

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To Prof. Thos. R. Lounsbury:

in recognition of his friendly counsels
& in token of my respect for his
scholarly attainments, & his
kindness of speech & of life.

Wm. Mitchell

Edgewood
Aug. 1889.

PREFACE.

THIS little book is made up from the opening series of a considerable range of "talks," with which — during the past few years — I have undertaken to entertain, and (if it might be) instruct a bevy of friends; and the interest of a few outsiders who have come to the hearings has induced me to put the matter in type. I feel somewhat awkwardly in obtruding upon the public any such panoramic view of British writers, in these days of specialists — when students devote half a lifetime to the analysis of the works of a single author, and to the proper study of a single period.

I have tried, however, to avoid bad mistakes and misleading ones, and shall reckon my commentary only so far forth good — as it may familiarize the

average reader with the salient characteristics of the writers brought under notice, and shall put these writers into such a swathing of historic and geographic enwrapments as shall keep them better in mind.

When I consider the large number of books recently issued on similar topics, and the scholarly acuteness, and the great range belonging to so many of them, I am not a little discomforted at thought of my bold scurry over so wide reach of ground. Indeed, I have the figure before me now — as I hint an apology — of an old-time country doctor who has ventured with his saddle-bags and spicy nostrums into competition with a half score of special practitioners — with their microscopy and their *granules dosimetriques;* but I think, consolingly, that possibly the old-time mediciner — if not able to cure, can at the least induce a pleasurable slumber.

EDGEWOOD, 1889.

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ENGLISH LANDS, LETTERS, & KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE undertaken in this book a series of very familiar and informal talks with my readers about English literary people, and the ways in which they worked; and also about the times in which they lived and the places where they grew up. We shall have, therefore, a good deal of concern with English history; and with English geography too — or rather topography: and I think that I have given a very fair and honest descriptive title to the material which I shall set before my readers, in calling it a book about ENGLISH LANDS AND LETTERS AND KINGS.

It appears to me that American young people have an advantage over British-born students of our History and Literature — in the fact that the localities consecrated by great names or events have more illuminating power to us, who encounter them rarely and after voyage over sea, than to the Englishman who lives and grows up beside them. Londoners pass Bolt Court, Fleet Street, and Dr. Johnson's tavern a hundred times a year with no thought but of the chops and the Barclay's ale to be had there. But to the cultivated American these localities start a charming procession, in which the doughty old Dictionary-maker, with his staff and long brown coat and three cornered hat, is easily the leader.

For my own part, when my foot first struck the hard-worked pavement of London Bridge, even the old nursery sing-song came over me with the force of a poem, —

> As I was going over London Bridge
> I found a penny and bought me a kid.

So, too — once upon a time — on a bright May-day along the Tweed, I was attracted by an old

square ruin of a tower — very homely — scarcely picturesque: I had barely curiosity enough to ask its name. A stone-breaker on the high-road told me it was Norham Castle; and straightway all the dash and clash of the poem of "Marmion"* broke around me.

Now I do not think our cousins the Britishers, to whom the loveliest ruins become humdrum, can be half as much alive as we, to this sort of enjoyment.

I shall have then — as I said — a great deal to say about the topography of England as well as about its books and writers; and shall try to tie together your knowledge of historic facts and literary ones, with the yet more tangible and associated geographic facts — so that on some golden day to come (as golden days do come) the sight of a mere thread of spire over tree-tops, or of a cliff on Yorkshire shores, or of a quaint gable that might have covered a "Tabard Tavern," shall set all your

---

* The breeze which swept away the smoke
Round Norham Castle rolled,
When all the loud artillery spoke,
With lightning flash and thunder stroke,
As Marmion left the hold.

historic reading on the flow again — thus extending and brightening and giving charm to a hundred wayside experiences of Travel.

One other preliminary word: — On that great reach of ground we are to pass over — if we make reasonable time — there must be long strides, and skippings: we can only seize upon illustrative types — little kindling feeders of wide-reaching flame. It may well be that I shall ignore and pass by lines of thought or progress very lively and present to you; may be I shall dwell on things already familiar; nay, it may well happen that many readers — young and old — fresh from their books — shall know more of matters touched on in our rapid survey than I know myself: never mind that; but remember, — and let me say it once for all — that my aim is not so much to give definite instruction as to put the reader into such ways and starts of thought as shall make him eager to instruct himself.

Early Centuries.

In those dreary early centuries when England was in the throes of its beginnings, and when the Roman eagle — which had always led a half-stifled life amongst British fogs, had gone back to its own eyrie in the South — the old stock historians could and did find little to fasten our regard — save the eternal welter of little wars. Indeed, those who studied fifty years ago will remember that all early British history was excessively meagre and stiff; some of it, I daresay, left yet in the accredited courses of school reading; dreadfully dull — with dates piled on dates, and battles by the page; and other pages of battle peppered with such names as Hengist, or Ethelred and Cerdic and Cuthwulf, or whoever could strike hardest or cut deepest.

But now, thanks to modern inquiry and to such men as Stubbs and Freeman and Wright, and the more entertaining Green — we get new light on those old times. We watch the ribs of that ancient land piling in distincter shape out of the water: we see the downs and the bluffs, and the fordable

places in the rivers; we know now just where great wastes of wood stood in the way of our piratical forefathers — the Saxons, the Jutes, and the Angles; these latter either by greater moral weight in them, or by the accident of numbers (which is the more probable), coming to give a name to the new country and language which were a-making together.

We find that those old Romans did leave, besides their long, straight, high-roads, and Roman villas, and store of sepulchral vases, a germ of Roman laws, and a little nucleus of Roman words, traceable in the institutions and — to some slight degree — in the language of to-day.

We see in the later pages of Green through what forests the rivers ran, and can go round about the great Roman-British towns (Roman first and then adopted by Britons) of London * and of York; and that other magnificent one of Cirencester (or Sisister as the English say, with a stout defiance of their alphabet). We can understand how and why the fat meadows of Somersetshire should be cov-

* London was possibly a British settlement before the Romans built there; though latest investigators, I think, favor the contrary opinion.

eted by marauders and fought for by Celts; and we behold more clearly and distinctly than ever, under the precise topography of modern investigators, the walls of wood and hills which stayed Saxon pursuit of those Britons who sought shelter in Wales, Cumberland, or the Cornish peninsula.

Celtic Literature.

Naturally, this flight of a nation to its fastnesses was not without clamor and lament; some of which — if we may trust current Cymric traditions — was put into such piercing sound as has come down to our own day in the shape of Welsh war-songs. Dates are uncertain; but without doubt somewhat of this Celtic shrill singing was of earlier utterance than anything of equal literary quality that came from our wrangling Saxon or West-Saxon forefathers in the fertile plains of England.

Some of these Celtic war strains have been turned into a music by the poet Gray* which our English

---

* "To Cattraeth's vale, in glittering row,
Twice two hundred warriors go;
Every warrior's manly neck
Chains of regal honor deck,

ears love; Emerson used to find regalement in the strains of another Welsh bard; and the Mabinogion, a pleasant budget of old Cymric fable,* has come to a sort of literary resurrection in our day under the hands of the late Sidney Lanier. If you would know more of things Celtic, I would commend to your attention a few lectures read at Oxford in 1864–65 by Matthew Arnold in which he has brought a curious zeal, and his wonted acumen

---

Wreathed in many a golden link:
From the golden cup they drink
Nectar that the bees produce,
Or the grape's ecstatic juice,
Flush'd with mirth and hope they burn,
But none from Cattraeth's vale return
Save Aëron brave, and Conan strong
(Bursting through the bloody throng),
And I, the meanest of them all
That live to weep and sing their fall."

* Lady CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH SCHREIBER (*née* GUEST) made the first translations which brought these Welsh romances into vogue. Among them, is *Geraint, the son of Erbin*, which in our day has developed into the delightful *Geraint and Enid*. Mr. W. F. Skene has published the texts of various poems (from original MSS.) attributed to Taliesin, Aneurin, and others, with translations by D. Sylvan Evans and Robert Williams.

to an investigation of the influences upon English literature of that old Celtic current. It was a wild, turbulent current; it had fret and roar in it; it had passion and splendor in it; and there are those who think that whatever ardor of imagination, or love for brilliant color or music may belong to our English race is due to old interfusion of British blood. Certainly the lively plaids of the Highlander and his bagpipes show love for much color and exuberant gush of sound; and we all understand that the Celtic Irishman has an appetite for a shindy which demonstrates a rather lively emotional nature.

Beginning of English Learning.

But over that ancient England covered with its alternating fens and forests, and grimy Saxon hamlets, and Celtic companies of huts, there streams presently a new civilizing influence. It is in the shape of Christian monks * sent by Pope Gregory the

* There was a sort of Christianizing of Britain in later Romish times, but not much warmth or spending force in it; and Wright assures us that amid all the Roman remains thus far brought to light of mosaics and vases, only one Christian

Great, who land upon the island of Thanet near the Thames mouth (whereabout are now the bustling little watering places of Ramsgate and Margate), and march two by two — St. Augustine among them and towering head and shoulders above the rest—bearing silver crosses and singing litanies, up to the halls of Ethelbert—near to the very site where now stands, in those rich Kentish lands, the august and beautiful Cathedral of Canterbury. There, too, sprung up in those earlier centuries that Canterbury School, where letters were taught, and learned men congregated, and whence emerged that famous scholar—Aldhelm,* of whom the great King Alfred speaks admiringly; who not only knew his languages but could sing a song; a sort of early Saxon Sankey who beguiled wanderers into better ways by his homely

symbol has been found. This is on a tessellated pavement of a Roman villa at Frampton, in Dorsetshire. Lysons published an engraving of this pavement.

See also GREEN (introduction to *Making of England*) in reference to Christian inscriptions and ornaments of Roman date. He makes no allusion to the Frampton symbol.

* GREEN: *Making of England*, p. 337. A church he erected at Bradford-on-Avon stands in almost perfect preservation to-day. MURRAY'S *Alph. Eng. Handbook.* The Editor of Guide Book makes an error in date of the erection.

rhythmic utterance. I think we may safely count this old Aldhelm, who had a strain of royal blood in him, as the first of English ballad-mongers.

From the north of England, too, there was at almost the same date, another gleam of crosses, coming by way of Ireland and Iona, where St. Columba,* commemorated in one of Wordsworth's Sonnets, had established a monastery. We have the good old Irish monk's lament at leaving his home in Ireland for the northern wilderness; there is true Irish fervor in it:—"From the high prow I look over the sea, and great tears are in my gray eyes when I turn to Erin —to Erin, where the songs of the birds are so sweet, and where the clerks sing like the birds; where the young are so gentle, and the old so wise; where the great men are so noble to look at, and the women so fair to wed."

Ruined remnants of the Iona monastery are still

---

* *Sonnet composed or suggested during a tour in Scotland, in summer of* 1833.

"Isle of Columba's Cell,
Where Christian piety's soul-cheering spark,
(Kindled from Heaven between the light and dark
Of time) shone like the morning-star,—farewell!"

. . . . . .

to be found on that little Western island — within hearing almost of the waves that surge into the caves of Staffa. And from this island stand-point, the monkish missions were established athwart Scotland; finding foothold too all down the coast of Northumberland. Early among these and very notable, was the famous Abbey of Lindisfarne or the Holy Isle, not far southward from the mouth of the Tweed. You will recall the name as bouncing musically, up and down, through Scott's poem of "Marmion." A little farther to the south, upon the Yorkshire coast, came to be established, shortly afterward, the Whitby monastery; its ruins make now one of the shows of Whitby town—one of the favorite watering places of the eastern coast of England, and well known for giving its name to what is called Whitby jet — which is only a finer sort of bituminous coal, of which there are great beds in the neighborhood.* The Abbey ruin is upon

* Of late years, owing to the difficulty of working, the mining and manufacture of the jet has nearly gone by — other carbon seams in Spain offering better and more economic results; these latter, however, still bear the name of Whitby Jet.

heights, from which are superb views out upon the German Sea that beats with grand uproar upon the Whitby cliffs. To the westward is the charming country of Eskdale, and by going a few miles southward one may come to Robinhood's bay; and in the intervening village of Hawsker may be seen the two stones said to mark the flight of the arrows of Robinhood and Little John, when they tried their skill for the amusement of the monks of Whitby.

Cædmon.

Well, in the year of our Lord 637, this Whitby Abbey was founded by the excellent St. Hilda, and it was under her auspices, and by virtue of her saintly encouragements, that the first true English poet, Cædmon, began to sing his Christian song of the creation. He was but a cattle-tender —unkempt—untaught, full of savagery, but with a fine phrenzy in him, which made his paraphrase of Scripture a spur, and possibly — in a certain imperfect sense, a model for the muse of John Milton.

Of the chaos before creation, he says :—

Earth's surface was
With grass not yet be-greened; while far and wide
The dusky ways, with black unending night
Did ocean cover.

Of the great Over-Lord God-Almighty, he says —

In Him, beginning never,
Or origin hath been; but he is aye supreme
Over heaven's thrones, with high majesty
Righteous and mighty.

And again, — that you may make for yourselves comparison with the treatment and method of Milton, — I quote this picture of Satan in hell: —

Within him boiled his thoughts about his heart;
Without, the wrathful fire pressed hot upon him —
He said, — 'This narrow place is most unlike
That other we once knew in heaven high,
And which my Lord gave me; tho' own it now
We must not, but to him must cede our realm.
Yet right he hath not done to strike us down
To hell's abyss — of heaven's realm bereft —
Which with mankind to people, he hath planned.
Pain sorest this, that Adam, wrought of Earth
On my strong throne shall sit, enjoying Bliss
While we endure these pangs — hell torments dire,
Woe! woe is me! Could I but use my hands
And might I be from here a little time —
One winter's space — then, with this host would I ——
But these iron bands press hard — this coil of chains ——

. . . . . .

There is but one known MS. copy of this poem. It is probably of the tenth, certainly not later than the eleventh century, and is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is illuminated, and some scenes represented seem to have been taken from the old miracle plays.* It was printed in 1655: in this form a copy is said to have reached the hands of Milton, through a friend of the printer: and it may well be that the stern old Puritan poet was moved by a hearing of it, — for he was blind at this date, — to the prosecution of that grand task which has made his name immortal.

Beda.

We might, however, never have known anything of Cædmon and of Saint Hilda and all the monasteries north and south, except for another worthy who grew up in the hearing of the waves which beat on the

* I ought to mention that recent critics have questioned if all the verse usually attributed to Cædmon was really written by him: nay, there have been queries — if the picture of Satan itself was not the work of another hand. An analysis of the evidence, by Thomas Arnold, may be found in *Ency. Br.* See, also, *Making of England*, Chap. VII., note, p. 370.

cliffs of north-eastern England. This was Beda, — respected in his own day for his industry, piety, straightforward honesty — and so followed by the respect of succeeding generations as to get and carry the name of the *Venerable* Beda. Though familiar with the people's language,* and with Greek, he wrote in monkish Latin — redeemed by classic touches — and passed his life in the monastery at Jarrow, which is on the Tyne, near the coast of Durham, a little to the westward of South Shields. An ancient church is still standing amid the ruins of the monastic walls, and a heavy, straight-backed chair of oak (which would satisfy the most zealous antiquarian by its ugliness) is still guarded in the chancel, and is called Beda's Chair.

Six hundred pupils gathered about him there, in the old days, to be taught in physics, grammar, rhetoric, music, and I know not what besides. So

* "During his last days verses of his own English tongue broke from time to time from the master's lip — rude runes that told how before the 'need-fare,' Death's stern 'must go,' none can enough bethink him what is to be his doom for good or ill. The tears of Beda's scholars mingled with his song. So the days rolled on to Ascension tide," etc.

learned and true was he, that the Pope would have called him to Rome ; but he loved better the wooded Tyne banks, and the gray moorlands, and the labors of his own monastery. There he lived out an honest, a plodding, an earnest, and a hopeful life. And as I read the sympathetic story of its end, and of how the old man — his work all done — lifted up a broken voice — on his last day — amidst his scholars, to the *Gloria in Excelsis* — I bethink me of his last eulogist, the young historian, who within a few months only after sketching that tender picture of his great forerunner in the paths of British history, laid down his brilliant pen — his work only half done, and died, away from his home, at Mentone, on the shores of the Mediterranean.

King Alfred.

A half century after the death of Beda began the Danish invasions, under which, monasteries churches schools went down in a flood of blood and fire. As we read of that devastation — the record covering only a half-page of the old Saxon Chronicle (begun after Beda's time) — it seems an incident ; yet the piratic storm, with intermittent fury, stretches over a

century and more of ruin. It was stayed effectively for a time when the great Alfred came to full power.

I do not deal much in dates: but you should have a positive date for this great English king: a thousand years ago (889) fairly marks the period when he was in the prime of life — superintending, very likely, the building of a British fleet upon the Pool, below London. He was born at Wantage, in Berkshire, a little to the south of the Great Western Railway; and in a glade near to the site of the old Saxon palace, is still shown what is called Alfred's Well. In the year 1849 his birthday was celebrated, after the lapse of a thousand years — so keen are these British cousins of ours to keep alive all their great memories. And Alfred's is a memory worth keeping. He had advantages — as we should say — of foreign travel; as a boy he went to Rome, traversing Italy and the Continent. If we could only get a good story of that cross-country trip of his!

We know little more than that he came to high honor at Rome, was anointed king there, before yet he had come to royalty at home. He makes also a second visit in company with his father Ethelwolf:

and on their return the Ethelwolf relieves the tedium of travel by marrying the twelve-year old daughter of Charles the Bald of France. Those were times of extraordinary daring.

The great king had throughout a most picturesque and adventurous life: he is hard pushed by the Danes — by rivals — by his own family; one while a wanderer on the moors — another time disguised as minstrel in the enemy's camp; but always high-hearted, always hopeful, always working. He is oppressed by the pall of ignorance that lays over that lordly reach of his kingdom: "Scarce a priest have I found," says he, "south of the Thames who can render Latin into English." He is not an apt scholar himself, but he toils at learning; his abbots help him; he revises old chronicles, and makes people to know of Beda; he has boys taught to write in English; gives himself with love to the rendering of Boëthius' "Consolation of Philosophy." He adopts its reasoning, and plants his hope on the creed—

1st. That a wise God governs.

2d. That all suffering may be made helpful.

3d. That God is chiefest good.

4th. That only the good are happy.

5th. That the foreknowledge of God does not conflict with Free-will.

These would seem to carry even now the pith and germ of the broadest theologic teachings.

It is a noble and a picturesque figure — that of King Alfred — which we see, looking back over the vista of a thousand years; better it would seem than that of King Arthur to weave tales around, and illumine with the heat and the flame of poesy. Yet poets of those times and of all succeeding times have strangely neglected this august and royal type of manhood.

After him came again weary Danish wars and wild blood-letting and ignorance surging over the land, save where a little light played fitfully around such great religious houses as those of York and Canterbury. It was the dreary Tenth Century, on the threshold of which he had died — the very core and kernel of the Dark Ages, when the wisest thought the end of things was drawing nigh, and strong men quaked with dread at sight of an eclipse, or comet, or at sound of the rumble of an earthquake. It was a time and a condition of

gloom which made people pardon, and even relish such a dismal poem as that of "The Grave," which — though bearing thirteenth century form — may well in its germ have been a fungal outgrowth of the wide-spread hopelessness of this epoch: —

For thee was a house built
Ere thou wert born;
For thee was a mold meant
Ere thou of mother cam'st.
But it is not made ready
Nor its depth measured,
Nor is it seen
How long it shall be.
Now I bring thee
Where thou shalt be
And I shall measure thee
And the mold afterward.
Doorless is that house
And dark is it within;
There thou art fast detained
And death hath the key
Loathsome is that earth-house
And grim within to dwell,
And worms shall divide thee.

From the death of Alfred (901) to the Norman Conquest (1066) there was monkish work done in shape of Homilies, Chronicles, grammars of Latin

and English — the language settling more and more into something like a determined form of what is now called Anglo-Saxon. But in that lapse of years I note only three historic incidents, which by reason of the traditions thrown about them, carry a piquant literary flavor.

Canute and Godiva.

The *first* is when the famous Canute, king of both England and Denmark, and having strong taste for song and music and letters, rows by the towers of a great East-England religious house, and as he drifts with the tide, composes (if we may trust tradition) a snatch of verse which has come down to us in a thirteenth century form, about the pleasant singing of the Monks of Ely. Wordsworth has embalmed the matter in one of his Ecclesiastic Sonnets (xxx.):

> A pleasant music floats along the mere,
> From monks in Ely chanting service high,
> While as Canute the king is rowing by;
> My oarsman quoth the mighty king, draw near
> That we the sweet songs of the monks may hear.
> He listens (all past conquests and all schemes

Of future vanishing like empty dreams)
Heart-touched, and haply not without a tear,
The royal minstrel, ere the Choir is still,
While his free barge skims the smooth flood along
Gives to the rapture an accordant Rhyme
O suffering Earth! be thankful; sternest Clime
And rudest Age are subject to the thrill
Of heaven-descended piety and song.

I think you will never go under the wondrous arches of Ely Cathedral — and you should go there if you ever travel into the eastern counties of England — without thinking of King Canute and of that wondrous singing of the monks, eight hundred years ago.

The *second* historic incident of which I spoke, is the murder of King Duncan by Macbeth in the year 1039, some twenty-five years before the Norman Conquest. I don't think you want any refreshing about Macbeth.

The *third* incident is of humbler tone, yet it went to show great womanly devotion, and lifted a tax from the heads of a whole towns-people. I refer to the tradition of Earl Leofric of Mercia and the Lady Godiva of Coventry, based in the main, without doubt, upon actual occurrence, and the subject for

centuries of annual commemoration.* Tennyson tells, in his always witching way, how

> She rode forth clothéd on with chastity:
> The deep air listened round her as she rode,
> —— the barking cur
> Made her cheek flame; her palfry's foot-fall shot
> Light horror thro' her pulses:
> One low churl compact of thankless earth
> Peep'd — but his eyes, before they had their will
> Were shrivelled into darkness in his head,
> And she, that knew not, pass'd; and all at once
> With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless noon
> Was clash'd and hammered from a hundred towers,
> One after one: But even then she gained
> Her bower; whence, re-issuing, robed and crowned,
> To meet her lord, she took the tax away
> And built herself an everlasting name.

Observe — that I call up these modern writers and their language, out of their turn as may seem to you, only that I may plant more distinctly in your

---

* It is of record in MATTHEW OF WESTMINSTER, a Benedictine monk of the fourteenth century—*Flores Historiarum* —first printed in 1567. "*Nuda equum ascendens, crines capitis et tricas dissolvens, corpus suum totum, prater crura candidissima inde velavit.*" The tradition is subject of crude mention in the *Polyolbion* of DRAYTON; I also refer the reader to the charming *Leofric and Godiva* of LANDOR.

thought the old incidents to which their words relate. It is as if I were speaking to you of some long-gone line of ancestors, and on a sudden should call up some delicate blond child and say — This one is in the line of direct descent; she bears the same old name, she murmurs the same old tunes; and this shimmer of gold in her hair is what shone on the heads of the good Saxon foreparents.

William the Norman.

We now come to a date to be remembered, and in the neighborhood of which our first morning's talk will come to an end. It is the date of the Norman Conquest — 1066 — that being the year of the Battle of Hastings, when the brave Harold, last of the Saxon kings went down, shot through the eye; and the lithe, clean-faced, smirking William of Normandy "gat him" the throne of England. These new-comers were not far-away cousins of our Saxon and Danish forefathers; only so recently as the reign of Alfred had they taken permanent foothold in that pleasant Norman country.

But they have not brought the Norse speech of

the old home land with them: they have taken to a Frankish language — we will call it Norman French — which is thenceforth to blend with the Saxonism of Alfred, until two centuries or more later, our own mother English — the English of Chaucer and of Shakespeare — is evolved out of the union. Not only a new tongue, do these conquerors bring with them, but madrigals and ballads and rhyming histories; they have great contempt for the stolid, lazy-going Latin records of the Saxon Chroniclers; they love a song better. In the very face of the armies at Hastings, their great minstrel *Taillefer* had lifted up his voice to chant the glories of Roland, about which all the histories of the time will tell you.

It was a new civilization (not altogether Christian) out-topping the old. These Normans knew more of war — knew more of courts — knew more of affairs. They loved money and they loved conquest. To love one in those days, was to love the other. King William swept the monasteries clean of those ignorant priests who had dozed there, from the time of Alfred, and put in Norman Monks with nicely clipped hair, who could construe Latin after latest

Norman rules. He new parcelled the lands, and gave estates to those who could hold and manage them. It was as if a new, sharp eager man of business had on a sudden come to the handling of some old sleepily conducted counting-room; he cuts off the useless heads; he squares the books; he stops waste; pity or tenderness have no hearing in his shop.

I mentioned not far back an old Saxon Chronicle, which all down the years, from shortly after Beda's day, had been kept alive — sometimes under the hands of one monastery, sometimes of another; here is what its Saxon Scribe of the eleventh century says of this new-come and conquering Norman King: It is good Saxon history, and in good Saxon style: —

"King William was a very wise man, and very rich, more worshipful and strong than any of his foregangers. He was mild to good men who loved God; and stark beyond all bounds to those who withsaid his will. He had Earls in his bonds who had done against his will; Bishops he set off their bishoprics; Abbots off their abbotries, and thanes in prison. By his cunning he was so thoroughly acquainted with England, that there is not a hide of land of which he did not know, both who had it, and what was its worth. He planted a great preserue for deer, and he laid down laws therewith, that whoever should slay hart or hind should be

blinded. He forbade the harts and also the boars to be killed. As greatly did he love the tall deer as if he were their father. . . . . He took from his subjects many marks of gold, and many hundred pounds of silver; and *that* he took — some by right, and some by mickle might for very little need. He had fallen into avarice; and greediness he loved withal. Among other things is not to be forgotten the good peace that he made in this land; so that a man who had any confidence in himself might go over his realm, with his bosom full of gold, unhurt. Nor durst any man slay another man had he done ever so great evil to the other. . . . Brytland (Wales) was in his power, and he therein wrought castles, and completely ruled over that race of men. . . . Certainly in his time men had great hardship, and very many injuries. . . . His rich men moaned, and the poor men murmured; but he was so hard that he recked not the hatred of them all. For it was need they should follow the King's will, if they wished to live, or to have lands or goods. Alas, that any man should be so moody, and should so puff up himself, and think himself above all other men! May Almighty God show mercy to his soul, and grant him forgiveness of his sins."

There are other contemporary Anglo-Saxon annalists, and there are the rhyming chroniclers of Norman blood, who put a better color upon the qualities of King William; but I think there is no one of them, who even in moments of rhetorical exaltation, thinks of putting William's sense of justice, or his kindness of heart, before his greed or his self-love.

Harold the Saxon.

The late Lord Lytton (Bulwer) gave to this period and to the closing years of Harold one of the most elaborate of his Historic Studies. He availed himself shrewdly of all the most picturesque aspects (and they were very many) in the career of Harold, and found startling historic facts enough to supply to the full his passion for exaggerated melodrama. There are brilliant passages in his book,* and a great wealth of archæologic material; he shows us the remnants of old Roman villas — the crude homeliness of Saxon house surroundings — the assemblage of old Palace Councils. Danish battle-axes, and long-bearded Saxon thanes, and fiery-headed Welshmen contrast with the polished and insidious Normans. Nor is there lacking a heavy and much over-weighted quota of love-making and misfortune, and joy and death. Tennyson has taken the same

* *Harold: the Last of the Saxon Kings;* first published in 1848 and dedicated to the Hon. C. T. D'Eyncourt, M.P., whose valuable library — says BULWER — supplied much of the material needed for the prosecution of the work.

subject, using the same skeleton of story for his play of Harold. It would seem that he has depended on the romance of Bulwer for his archæology; and indeed the book is dedicated to the younger Lord Lytton (better known in the literary world as "Owen Meredith"). As a working play, it is counted, like all of Tennyson's — a failure; but there are passages of exceeding beauty.

He pictures the King Harold — the hero that he is — but with a veil of true Saxon gloom lowering over him: he tells the story of his brother Tostig's jealous wrath, — always in arms against Harold: he tells of the hasty oath, which the king in young days had sworn to William in Normandy, never to claim England's throne: and this oath hangs like a cloud over the current of Harold's story. The grief, and noble devotion of poor Edith, the betrothed bride of the king, whom he is compelled by a devilish diplomacy to discard — is woven like a golden thread into the woof of the tale: and Aldwyth, the queen, whom Harold did not and can never love, is set off against Edith — in Tennyson's own unmatchable way in the last scenes of the tragedy.

We are in the camp at Hastings: the battle waits;

a vision of Norman saints, on whose bones Harold had sworn that dreadful oath, comes to him in his trance: — They say — (these wraiths of saints) —

> O hapless Harold! king but for an hour!
> Thou swarest falsely by our blessed bones,
> We give our voice against thee out of Heaven!
> And warn him against the fatal *arrow.*

And Harold — waking — says —

> Away!
> My battle-axe against your voices!

And then — remembering that old Edward the Confessor had told him on his deathbed that he should die by an arrow — his hope faints.

> The king's last word — "the arrow," I shall die:
> I die for England then, who lived for England.
> What nobler? Man must die.
> I cannot fall into a falser world —
> I have done no man wrong. . . .

Edith (his betrothed) comes in —

> Edith! — Edith!
> Get thou into thy cloister, as the king
> Will'd it: . . . There, the great God of Truth
> Fill all thine hours with peace! A lying Devil
> Hath haunted me — mine oath — my wife — I fain

Had made my marriage not a lie ; I could not:
Thou art my bride ! and thou, in after years,
Praying perchance for this poor soul of mine
In cold, white cells, beneath an icy moon.
This memory to thee ! — and this to England,
My legacy of war against the Pope,
From child to child, from Pope to Pope, from Age to Age,
Till the sea wash her level with her shores,
Or till the Pope be Christ's.

Aldwyth, the queen, glides in, and seeing Edith, says —

Away from him ! Away !

Edith says (we can imagine her sweet plaintiveness) —

I will. . . . I have not spoken to the king
One word : and one I must. Farewell !

And she offers to go.

But Harold, beckoning with a grand gesture of authority —

Not yet !
Stay ! The king commands thee, woman !

And he turns to Aldwyth, from whose kinsmen he had expected aid —

Have thy two brethren sent their forces in ?
Aldwyth — Nay, I fear not.

And Harold blazes upon her —

Then there's no force in thee!
Thou didst possess thyself of Edward's ear
To part me from the woman that I loved.

. . . . . .

Thou hast been false to England and to me!
As — in some sort — I have been false to thee.
Leave me. No more. — Pardon on both sides. — Go!
Aldwyth — Alas, my lord, I loved thee!
O Harold! husband! Shall we meet again?
Harold — After the battle — after the battle. Go.
Aldwyth — I go. (*Aside.*) That I could stab her standing there! (*Exit Aldwyth.*)
Edith — Alas, my lord, she loved thee.
Harold — Never! never!
Edith — I saw it in her eyes!
Harold — I see it in thine!
And not on thee — nor England — fall God's doom!
Edith — On *thee?* on me. And thou art England! Alfred
Was England. Ethelred was nothing. England
Is but her king, as thou art Harold!
Harold — Edith,
The sign in Heaven — the sudden blast at sea —
My fatal oath — the dead saints — the dark dreams —
The Pope's Anathema — the Holy Rood
That bow'd to me at Waltham — Edith, if
I, the last English King of England ——
Edith — No,
First of a line that coming from the people,
And chosen by the people ——

Harold — And fighting for
And dying for the people ——
Look, I will bear thy blessing into the battle
And front the doom of God.

And he did affront it bravely ; and the arrow did slay him, near to the spot where the Saxon standard flew to the breeze on that fateful day.

The play from which I have quoted may have excess of elaboration and an over-finesse in respect of details : but there are great bold reaches of descriptive power, a nobility of sentiment, and everywhere tender and winning touches, which will be very sure to give to the drama of Tennyson permanence and historic dignity, and keep it always a literary waymark in the fields we have gone over. The scene of that decisive contest is less than a two hours' ride away from London (by the Southeastern Railway) at a village called Battle — seven miles from the coast line at Hastings — in the midst of a beautiful rolling country, with scattered copses of ancient wood and a great wealth of wild flowers — (for which the district is remarkable) sparkling over the fields.

The Conqueror built a great abbey there —

Battle Abbey — whose ruins are visited by hundreds every year. A large portion of the old religious house, kept in excellent repair, and very charming with its growth of ivy and its embowering shade, is held in private hands — being the occasional residence of the Duke of Cleveland. Amid the ruins the usher will guide one to a crypt of the ancient chapel — whose solid Norman arches date back to the time of the Conqueror, and which is said to mark the very spot on which Harold fell, wounded to the death, on that memorable day of Hastings.

CHAPTER II.

I RECUR a moment to what was said in our opening talk — as a boy will wisely go back a little way for a better jump forward. I spoke — the reader will remember — of ringing, Celtic war-songs, which seemed to be all of literature that was drifting in the atmosphere, when we began: then there came a gleam of Christian light and of monkish learning thro' St. Augustine in Southern England; and another gleam through Iona, and Lindisfarne, from Irish sources; then came Cædmon's Bible singing, — which had echo far down in Milton's day; next the good old Beda, telling the story of these things; then — a thousand years ago, — the Great Alfred, at once a book-maker and a King. Before him and after him came a dreary welter of Danish wars; the great Canute — tradition says — chirping a song in the middle of them; and last, the slaughter

of Hastings, where the Saxon Harold went down, and the conquering Norman came up.

Geoffrey of Monmouth.

We start to-day with an England that has its office-holding and governing people speaking one language — its moody land-holders and cultivators speaking another — and its irascible Britons in Wales and Cumbria and Cornwall speaking yet another. Conquered people are never in much mood for song-singing or for history-making. So there is little or nothing from English sources for a century or more. Even the old Saxon Chronicle kept by monks (at Peterboro in this time), does not grow into a stately record, and in the twelfth century on the year of the death of King Stephen, dies out altogether.

But there is a Welsh monk — Geoffrey of Monmouth * — living just on the borders of Wales, and probably not therefore brought into close connection with this new Norman element — who writes

* GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH (Bishop of St. Asaph), d. 1154. His *Cronicon, sive Historia Britonum* first printed in 1508: translated into Eng., 1718. Vid. *Wright's Essays Arch. Sub.*, 1861.

(about one hundred years after the Conquest) a half-earnest and mostly-fabulous British Chronicle. He professes to have received its main points from a Walter — somebody, who had rare old bookish secrets of history, derived from Brittany, in his keeping. You will remember, perhaps, how another and very much later writer — sometimes known as Geoffrey Crayon — once wrote a History of New York, claiming that it was made up from the MSS. of a certain Diedrich Knickerbocker: I think that perhaps the same sense of quiet humor belonged to both these Geoffreys. Certainly Geoffrey of Monmouth's Chronicle bears about the same relation to British matters of fact which the Knickerbocker story of New York bears to the colonial annals of our great city.

The fables which were told in this old Monmouth Chronicle are more present in men's minds to-day than the things which were real in it: there was, for instance, the fable about King Lear (who does not know King Lear?): then, there were the greater fables about good King Arthur and his avenging Caliburn (who does not know King Arthur?). These two stories are embalmed now in Literature, and will never perish.

King Arthur Legends.

Those Arthur legends had been floating about in ballad or song, but they never had much mention in anything pretending to be history * until Geoffrey of Monmouth's day. There is nothing of them in the Saxon Chronicle: nothing of them in Beda: King Alfred never mentions King Arthur.

But was there ever a King Arthur? Probably: but at what precise date is uncertain: probable, too, that he had his court — as many legends run — one time at Caerleon, "upon Usk," and again at Camelot.† Caerleon is still to be found by the curious traveller, in pleasant Monmouthshire, just upon the borders of Wales, with Tintern Abbey and the grand ruin of Chepstow not far off; and a great amphitheatre among the hills (very likely of Roman

* Such exception as the name warrants, must be made in favor of NENNIUS, § 50, A.D. 452.

† Other important Arthurian localities belong to the north and west of England; and whoso is curious in such matters, will read with interest Mr. STUART GLENNIE'S ingenious argument to prove that Scotland was the great cradle of Arthurian Romance. *Early English Text Society, Part iii.*, 1869.

origin) with green turf upon it, and green hill-sides hemming it in — is still called King Arthur's Round Table.

Camelot is not so easy to trace: the name will not be found in the guide-books: but in Somersetshire, in a little parish, called "Queen's Camel," are the remains of vast entrenchments, said to have belonged to the tourney ground of Camelot. A little branch of the Yeo River (you will remember this name, if you have ever read Charles Kingsley's "Westward, Ho" —a book you should read)—a little branch, I say, of the Yeo runs through the parish, and for irrigating purposes is held back by dykes, and then shot, shining, over the green meadows: hence, Tennyson may say truly, as he does in his Idyls of the King —

> "They vanished panic-stricken, like a shoal
> Of darting fish, that on a summer's morn
> Adown the crystal dykes at *Camelot*,
> Come slipping o'er their shadow, on the sand."

There are some features of this ancient fable of King Arthur, which are of much older literary date than the times we are now speaking of. Thus "the dusky barge," that appears on a sudden — coming to carry off the dying King, —

"—— whose decks are dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream — by these
Three queens with crowns of gold, and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars ——"

has a very old germ ;—Something not unlike this watery bier, to carry a dead hero into the Silences, belongs to the opening of that ancient poem of Beowulf — which all students of early English know and prize — but which did not grow on English soil, and therefore does not belong to our present quest.* The brand Excalibur, too, which is thrown into the sea by King Arthur's friend, and which is caught by an arm clothed in white samite, rising from the mere, and three times brandished, has its prototype in the "old mighty sword" which is put into the hands of Beowulf before he can slay the great sea-dragon of the Scandinavian fable.

Now, these Arthurian stories, put into book by

* The fable is Scandinavian. The Anglo-Saxon version, dating probably from the seventh century, makes it a very important way-mark in the linguistic history of England. Eng. editions are numerous: among them — those of KEMBLE, 1833–7: THORPE, 1855 and 1875: ARNOLD, 1876: also (Am. ed.) HARRISON, 1883: Translations accompany the three first named: a more recent one has appeared (1883) by DR. GARNETT of Md.

Geoffrey — a Latin book, for all the monks wrote in Latin, though they may have sung songs in English, as good father Aldhelm did — were presently caught up by a romance-writer, named Wace, who was living at Caen, in Normandy, and whose knightly cousins (some say father and titled baron) had come over with William the Conqueror, — the name being long known in Nottinghamshire. This Wace put these Arthur stories into Norman verse — adding somewhat and giving a French air, which made his book sought after and read in royal courts; and fragments of it were chanted by minstrels in castle halls.

Then, this Arthur mine of Legends was explored again by another priest and Welshman, who came to have some place at Oxford, where the beginnings of the great university were then a-brew. This writer, Walter Map * by name — or Mapes, as he is sometimes called — lived just about the meeting of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the crusades were in full blast, and when dreams about the.

* WALTER MAP, or MAPES, was born on the borders of Wales about 1143, and was living as Archdeacon at Oxford as late as 1196: possibly this was the Walter who supplied material to GEOFFREY of Monmouth; there was however another WALTER (CALIENUS) who was also Archdeacon at Oxford.

Holy Sepulchre hovered round half the house roofs of England. People saw in visions the poor famished pilgrims, fainting with long marches toward the far-away Jerusalem, and shot down by cruel Saracen arrows, within sight of the Holy of Holies. So Walter Map, the priest (they say he was one while chaplain to Henry II.), writing under light of that fierce enthusiasm, puts a religious element into the Arthur stories; and it is from him — in all probability — comes that Legend of the Holy Graal — the cup which caught the sacred blood, and which saintly knights were to seek after, the pure Sir Galahad being the winning seeker.

Nor did the Arthur legends stop here: but another priestly man, Layamon* — he, too, living on the borders of Wales, in the foraging ground of Arthur's knights, not far from the present town of Kidderminster (which we know carpet-wise)—set himself to turning the Legends, with many additions, into short, clanging, alliterative Saxon verses,

* Layamon's work supposed to date (there being only internal evidence of its epoch) in the first decade of the thirteenth century. Vid. MARSH: *English Language and Early Literature.* Lecture IV. An edition, with translation, was published by Sir Frederic Madden in 1857.

with occasional rhyme — the first English (or Teutonic) wording of the story; Map's version being in Latin and French. He copies very much from Wace (*Le Brut d'Angleterre*), but his book is longer by a half. It has its importance, too — this Layamon version — in the history of the language. Of the why and the how, and of its linguistic relations to the Anglo-Saxon, or the modern tongue, I shall leave discussion in the hands of those more instructed in the history of Early English. We know this Layamon in our present writing, only as a simple-minded, good, plodding, West-of-England priest, who asked God's blessing on his work, and who put that quaint alliterative jingle in it, which in years after was spent in larger measure over the poem of Piers Plowman, and which, still later, comes to even daintier usage when the great master — Spenser

"—— fills with flowers fair Flora's painted lap."

Even now we are not through with this story of the Arthurian legends: it does not end with the priest Layamon. After printing was invented, and an easier way of making books was in vogue than the old one of tediously copying them upon parch-

ment—I say in this new day of printing a certain Sir Thomas Mallory, who lived at the same time with Caxton, the first English printer, did, at the instance, I think, of that printer—put all these legends we speak of into rather stiff, homely English prose—copying, Caxton tells us, from a French original: but no such full French original has been found; and the presumption is that Mallory borrowed (as so many book-makers did and do) up and down, from a world of manuscripts. And he wrought so well that his work had great vogue, and has come to frequent issue in modern times, under the hands of such editors as Southey, Wright, Strachey and Lanier. In the years following Mallory, succeeding writers poached frequently upon the old Arthur preserve—bit by bit*—till at last, in our day, Tennyson told his "Idyl of the King"—

> "—— and all the people cried,
> Arthur is come again: he cannot die.
> And those that stood upon the hills behind
> Repeated—Come again, and thrice as fair."

* Among other direct Arthurian growths may be noted MORRIS'S *Defence of Guinevere;* ARNOLD'S *Tristram and Iseult;* QUINET'S *Merlin,* WAGNER'S Operatic Poems, and SMITH'S *Edwin of Deira.*

Early Norman Kings.

We come back now from this chase of Arthur, to the time of the Early Norman Kings: Orderic Vitalis,* of Normandy, William of Malmsbury, † Matthew Paris,‡ William of Newburgh,§ (whose record has just now been re-edited and printed in England,) and Roger of Hoveden,‖ were chroniclers of this period; but I am afraid these names will hardly be kept in mind. Indeed, it is not worth much struggle to do so, unless one is going into the writing of History on his own account. Exception ought perhaps to be made in favor of Matthew Paris, who was a monk of

* ORDERIC VITALIS, b. 1075; d. 1150. Of Abbey of St. Evroult, in Normandy. An edition of his *Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy* was published in 1826, with notice of writer, by GUIZOT.

† WILLIAM OF MALMSBURY: dates uncertain; his record terminates with year 1143.

‡ MATTHEW PARIS, 1200–1259, a monk of St. Albans. His *Historia Major* extends from 1235 to 1259.

§ WILLIAM OF NEWBURGH, b. 1136; d. 1208. New edition of his record (*Hist. Rerum Anglicarum*), edited by RICHARD HOWLET, published in 1884.

‖ ROGER DE HOVEDEN of twelfth century, (date uncertain.) His annals first published in 1595.

St. Albans, who won his name from studying at Paris (as many live students of that day did), who put a brave and vehement Saxonism of thought into his Latin speech—who had art enough to illustrate his own Chronicle with his pencil, and honesty enough to steer by God's rule only and not by the King's. One should remember, too, that this was about the period of the best Provençal balladry (in which Richard Cœur de Lion was proficient);—that strain of mediæval music and love regaling the Crusader knights on their marches toward Judea, and that strain of music and love waking delightful echoes against Norman castle-walls on their return. Again, one should keep note of the year when *Magna Charta* was granted by King John (1215), and remember, furthermore, that within ten years of the same date (1205) Layamon probably put the finishing touches to his *Brut*, and the Arthurian stories I was but now speaking of.

Throughout these times — we will say the twelfth century and early in the thirteenth,—England was waxing every day stronger, though it grew strong in a rough and bloody way; the great Norman castles were a-building up and down the land—

such as Conway and Rochester and Cardiff and Kenilworth: the older cathedrals, too, such as Durham and Winchester and Canterbury and Ely were then piling column by column and vault by vault toward the grand proportions which amaze us today. It was the time of growing trade too: ships from Genoa and Venice lay off the Thames banks, and had brought thither cargoes of silks and glass, jewels, Milanese armor, and spices. Cloth-makers came over from Flanders and made settlements in England.

Perhaps you have read Scott's story of the "Betrothed." If so, you will remember his description of just such a Flemish settlement in its earlier chapters, with its Wilkin Flammock and its charming Rose. The scene is laid in the time of Henry II., that sturdy King, who had such woful trouble with his wild sons, Richard and John, and still larger trouble with Thomas à Becket, (known now, as Harold is known, by Tennyson's tender music) who came to his death at last by the King's connivance, under the arches of Canterbury Cathedral; and so made that shrine sacred for pilgrims, whether they came from the "Tabard Inn," or otherwheres.

That story of the "Betrothed" puts in presence winningly, the threefold elements of English population in that day — the Britons, the Saxons, and the Normans. The Britons are pictured by a scene of revel in the great rambling palace of a Welsh King, where the bard Cadwallon sings, and that other bard, Caradoc — both historic characters; and it is upon a legend in the chronicle of the latter, Southey has based his poem of "Madoc." The Normans are represented, in the same romance, by the men-at-arms, or knights of the Castle of *La Garde Doloureuse*, and the Saxons by the fierce old lady in the religious house of Baldringham, where Eveline the heroine, had such fearful experiences with hobgoblins over night. There may be lapses in the archæology — as where Scott puts a hewn fireplace upon the wall of the dining-room of the Lady Ermengarde — antiquarians being pretty well agreed that chimneys of such class were unknown up to the fourteenth century; but still the atmosphere of twelfth-century life in England is better given than in most of our histories.*

* I do not mean to say that Scott's portraitures may be taken as archæologic data, or that one in search of the last

Richard Cœur de Lion.

In the same connection and with same commendation, may be named those other romances, "The Talisman" and "Ivanhoe," both relating to epochs in the life of King Richard I. I suppose that of all English people, who have any figure in their minds of Richard Cœur de Lion, his bearing and character, four-fifths will have derived the larger part of their impressions from these two books of Scott. It is a painting by a friendly hand: Scott loved kings; and he loved the trace of Saxonism that was in Richard's blood; he loved his bravery, as every Englishman always had and should. Is it quite needful that the friendly painter should put in all the bad birth-marks, or the bristling red beard? M. Taine scores him savagely, and would have him a

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and minutest truths respecting our Welsh or Saxon progenitors should not go to more recondite sources; meantime you will get very much from the reading of Scott to aid you in forming an image of those times; and, what is better still, you will very likely carry from the Romancer's glowing pages a sharpened appetite for the more careful but duller work of the historians proper.

beast: and Thackeray, in his little story of Rebecca and Rowena, uses a good deal of blood in the coloring.

No doubt he was cruel: but those were days of cruelty and of cruel kings. At least he was openly cruel: he carried his big battle-axe in plain sight, and if he met a foe thwacked him on the head with it, and there was an end. But he did not kill men on the sly like his brother King John, nor did he poison men by inches in low dungeons, as did so many of the polite and courteous Louis' of France.

As people say now — in a good Saxon way — you knew where to find him. He was above-board, and showed those traits of boldness and frankness which almost make one forgive his cruelties. He was a rough burr; and I daresay wiped his beard upon the sleeve of his doublet, besides killing a great many people he should not have killed, at Ascalon. At any rate, we shall not set to work here to gainsay or discredit those charming historic pictures of Scott. We shall keep on going to the pleasant tournament-ground at Ashby-de-la-Zouche every time the fanfare of those trumpets breaks the silence of a leisure

day; and so will our children; and so, I think, will our children's children. We shall keep on listening to Wamba's jokes, and keep on loving Rebecca, and keep on — not thinking much of the airy Rowena, and keep on throwing our caps in the air whenever the big knight in black armor, who is Richard of England, rides in upon the course — whatever all the Frenchmen in the world may say about him.

This Cœur de Lion appears too in the "Talisman" — one of Scott's tales of the crusaders: and here we see him set off against other monarchs of Europe; as we find England, also, set off against the other kingdoms. The King came home, you will remember, by the way of Austria, and was caught and caged there many months — for a time none of his people knowing where he was: this is good romance and history too. A tradition, which probably has a little of both, says his prison was discovered by a brother minstrel, who wandered under castle-walls in search of him, and sang staves of old Provençal songs that were favorites of the King's. Finally Richard responded from the depths of his dungeon. Howsoever this be, he was found, ran-

somed, and came home—to the great grief of his brother John; all which appears in the story of Ivanhoe, and in the chronicles of the time—based upon the reports of the King's chaplain, Anselm.

Times of King John.

King John—a base fellow every way—has a date made for him by the grant of *Magna Charta*, A.D. 1215, of which I have already spoken, and of its near coincidence with the writing of the *Brut* of Layamon. His name and memory also cling to mind in connection with two other events which have their literary associations.

First, this scoundrelly King could only keep power by making away with his little nephew Arthur, and out of this tragedy Shakespeare has woven his play of John—not very much read perhaps, and rarely acted; but in the old, school reader-books of my time there used to be excerpted a passage—a whole scene, in fact—representing the interview between Arthur and his gaoler Hubert, who is to put out the poor boy's eyes. I quote a fragment:—

Arthur — Must you with irons burn out both mine eyes?

Hubert — Young boy, I must.

Arthur — And will you?

Hubert — And I will.

Arthur — Have you the heart? When your head did but ache,
I knit my handkerchief about your brows.

And again, when the ruffians come in with the irons, Hubert says —

"Give me the irons, I say, and bind him here."

Arthur — Alas, what need you be so boisterous rough?
I will not struggle; I will stand stone still;
For Heaven's sake, Hubert, let me not be bound.

I don't know how young people are made up now-a-days; but in the old times this used to touch us and almost set us upon the "weep" and make us rank King John with Beelzebub and—the School-master.

Second: In King John's day Normandy was lost to England—the loss growing largely, in fact, out of the cruelty just named, and its ensuing wars. Losing Normandy had a vast influence upon the growing speech of England. Hitherto the cherished mother-land had been across the channel. Sons of

the well-born had been sent over to learn French on French ground: young ladies of fashion ordered, without doubt, their best cloaks and hats from Rouen: the English ways of talk might do for the churls and low-born: but it was discredited by the more cultivated — above all by those who made pursuit of the gayeties and elegancies of life. The priest fraternity and the universities of course kept largely by Latin; and the old British speech only lived in the mountains and in the rattling war-songs of the Welsh bards. But when Norman nobles and knights found themselves cut off from their old home associations with Normandy, and brought into more intimate relations with the best of the English population, there grew up a new pride in the land and language of their adoption. Hence there comes about a gradual weaning from France. London begins to count for more than Rouen. The Norman knights and barons very likely season their talk with what they may have called English slang; and the better taught of the islanders — the sons of country franklins affected more knowledge of the Norman tongue, and came to know the French romances, which minstrels sang at their

doors. So it was that slowly, and with results only observable after long lapse of years, the nation and language became compacted into one; and the new English began to be taught in the schools.

Mixed Language.

Of the transition stage, as it was called, there are narrative poems of record, which were written with a couplet in Norman French, and then a couplet in English. There were medleys, too, of these times, in which the friars mingled the three tongues of Latin, French, and English.* Blood mingled as languages mingled; and by the middle of the fourteenth century a man was no longer foreign because he was of Norman descent, and no longer vulgar because he was of Saxon.

To this transition time—in Henry III.'s day (who

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* I give fragment of one, of the reign of Edward II., cited by MR. MARSH: p. 247, *English Language and Early Literature.*

"Quant honme deit parleir, videat qua verba loquatur;
Sen covent aver, ne stultior inveniatur,
Quando quis loquitur, bote resoun reste therynne
Derisum patitur, ant lutel so shal he wynne," *etc.*

had a long reign of fifty-six years — chiefly memorable for its length), there appeared the rhyming Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester;* — what we should call a doggerel story of England from fabulous times down, and worthy of mention as the first serious attempt at an English-written history — others noticed already being either merely bald chronicles, or in scholastic Latin, or in French metric form. I give you a little taste of his wooden verse —

—— Lyncolne [has] fairest men,
Grantebrugge, and Hontyndon most plente ò deep fen,
Ely of fairest place, of fairest site Rochester,
Even agen Fraunce stonde ye countre ò Chichester,
Norwiche agen Denemark, Chestre agen Irelond,
Duram agen Norwei, as ich understonde.

Yet he tells us some things worth knowing — about every-day matters — about the fish and the fruits and the pastures, and the things he saw with his own eyes. And we learn from these old chron-

* Robert of Gloucester lived in the latter part of the thirteenth century, perhaps surviving into the fourteenth. In addition to his *Chronicle of England*, he is thought to have written *Lives and Legends of the English Saints*.

iclers how much better a story a man can make, and how much more worth it is — in telling of the things he has really seen, than of the things he has not seen. Most of these old writing people must needs begin at the beginning — drawling over the ancient fables about the Creation and Siege of Troy, keeping by the conventional untruths, and so — very barren and good for nothing, until they get upon their own days, when they grow rich and meaty and juicy, in spite of themselves, and by reason of their voluble minuteness, and their mention of homely, every-day unimportant things. They cannot tell lies, without fear of detection, on their own ground: and so they get that darlingest quality of all history — the simple truth.

But if a man wanders otherwheres and makes report, he may tell lies, and the lies may amuse and get him fame. Thus it happened with another well-known but somewhat apocryphal writer of this Transition English epoch; I mean Sir John Mandeville, whose book of travels into distant countries had a very great run.

Sir John Mandeville.

We know little of Mandeville except what he tells us; — that he was born at St. Albans — twenty miles from London, a place famous for its great abbey and its Roman remains — in the year 1300: — that he studied to be a mediciner — then set off (1322) on his travels into Egypt, Tartary, China, and Persia — countries visited by that more famous Venetian traveller, Marco Polo,* a half century earlier; — also, at other dates by certain wandering Italian Friars† of less fame. From some of these earlier travellers it is now made certain that Sir John pilfered very largely; — so largely, in fact, and so rashly, that there is reason to doubt, not only his stories about having been in the service of a Sultan

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* *Il milione di Messer Marco Polo, Veneziano.* Florence, 1827. MARCO POLO d. 1323.

† ODORIC, a priest of Pordenone in Friuli, who went on Church mission about 1318. His narrative is to be found in the *Ramusio Col.*, 2d. Vol. 1574. CARPINI (JOANNES *de Plano*), was a Franciscan from near Perugia, who travelled East about 1245. HAKLUYT has portions of his narrative: but full text is only in *Recueil de Voyages*, Vol. IV., by M. D'AVEZAC.

of Egypt or of the Khan of Kathay — as he avers — but also to doubt if he visited at all the far-away countries which he pretends to describe.

Nay, so deflowered is he of his honors in these latter days, that recent critics * are inclined to question his right to the title of Sir John, and to deny wholly his authorship of that English version of the tales of travel, which have been so long and pleasantly associated with his name.

This seems rather hard measure to mete out to the garrulous old voyager; nor does the evidence against his having Englished his own *Romance* stories, appear fully conclusive. What we may count for certain about the matter is this: — There does exist a very considerable budget of delightfully extravagant travellers' tales, bearing the Mandeville name, and written in an English which — with some mending of bygone words — is charming now: and which may be called the first fair and square book of the new English prose; — meaning by that — the first book of length and of popular currency which introduced a full measure — perhaps over-running

* Messrs. NICHOLSON and YULE, who are sponsors for the elaborate article in the *Br. Ency.*

measure — of those words of Romance or Latin origin, which afterward came to be incorporated in the English of the fifteenth century. The book has no English qualities — beyond its language; and might have been written by a Tartar, who could tell of Munchausen escapes and thank God in good current dialect of Britain.

I give a specimen from the description of his descent into the Valley Perilous — which he found beside the Isle of Mistorak, nigh to the river Phison:

This Vale is all full of devils, and hath been always. And men say there that it is one of the entries of hell. In that Vale is plenty of gold and silver; wherefore many misbelieving men, and many Christians also, oftentimes go in, to have of the treasure. . . . And in midplace of that Vale is an head of the visage of a devil bodily — full horrible and dreadful to see. But there is no man in the world so hardy, Christian man, ne other, but that he would be drad [afraid] for to behold it. For he beholdeth every man so sharply with dreadful eyen that ben evermore moving and sparkling as fire, and changeth and steereth so often in divers manner, with so horrible countenance, that no man dare not nighen toward him.

The author says fourteen of his party went in, and when they came out — only nine: "And we wisten never, whether that our fellows were lost or elles

turned again for dread. But we never saw them never after." He says there were plenty of jewels and precious stones thereabout, but "I touched none, because that the Devils be so subtle to make a thing to seem otherwise than it is, for to deceive mankind." He tells us also of the giants Gog and Magog, and of a wonderful bird — like the roc of Arabian Nights' fable — that would carry off an elephant in its talons, and he closes all his stupendous narratives with thanks to God Almighty for his marvellous escapes.

I have spoken of its popularity. Halliwell — who edits the London edition of 1839 — says that of no book, with the exception of Scriptures, are there so many MSS. of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries existing; showing that for two centuries its fables were either not exploded, or at least lost not their relish.

Early Book-making.

And now, what do we mean by books and by popularity at the end of the thirteenth century? The reader must keep in mind that our notion of popularity measured by thousands of copies would

then have been regarded as strange as the most monstrous of Sir John Mandeville's stories. There was no printing; there was no paper, either — as we understand. The art, indeed, of making paper out of pulp did exist at this date with the Oriental nations — perhaps with the Moors in Spain, but not in England. Parchment made from skins was the main material, and books were engrossed laboredly with a pen or stylus. It was most likely a very popular book which came to an edition of fifty or sixty copies within five years of its first appearance: and a good manuscript was so expensive an affair that its purchase was often made a matter to be testified to by subscribing witnesses, as we witness the transfer of a house. A little budget of these manuscripts made a valuable library. When St. Augustine planted his Church in Kent — he brought nine volumes with him as his literary treasure.

Lanfranc, who was one of the Norman abbots brought over by the Conqueror to build up the priesthood in learning, made order in 1072 that at Lent the librarian should deliver to the worthiest of the brotherhood each a book; and these were to have a year to read them. At the commencement of

the fourteenth century there were only four classics in the royal library of Paris; and at the same date the library of Oxford University consisted of a few tracts kept in chests under St. Mary's Church. — Green, in his "Making of England,"* cites from Alcuin a bit of that old Churchman's Latin poem — "*De Pontificibus*" — which he says is worthy of special note, as the first catalogue which we have of any English Library.

> "Quidquid Gregorius summus docet, et Leo Papa;
> Basilius quidquid, Fulgentius atque, coruscant,
> Cassiodorus item, Chrysostomus atque Johannes
> Quidquid et Athelmus docuit, quid Beda magister."

Beda and Aldhelm are the only English writers represented; and the catalogue — if we call it such — could be written on a half-page of note paper — Metaphors and Geography and Theology and decorative epithets included.

Thus in these times a book was a book: some of them cost large sums; the mere transcription into plain black-letter or Old English was toilsome and involved weeks and months of labor; and when it

* Page 407, chap. viii.

came to illuminated borders, or initials and title-pages with decorative paintings, the labor involved was enormous. There were collectors in those days as now — who took royal freaks for gorgeous missals; and monkish lives were spent in gratifying the whims of such collectors. In the year 1237 (Henry III.) there is entry in the Revenue Roll of the costs of silver clasps and studs for the King's *great book of Romances*. Upon the continent, in Italy, where an art atmosphere prevailed that was more enkindling than under the fogs of this savage England, such work became thoroughly artistic; and even now beautiful *motifs* for decoration on the walls of New York houses are sought from old French or Latin manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

And where was this work of making books done? There were no book-shops or publishers' houses, but in place of them abbeys or monasteries — each having its *scriptorium* or writing-room, where, under the vaulted Norman arches and by the dim light of their loop-holes of windows, the work of transcription went on month after month and year after year. Thus it is recorded that in that old mon-

astery of St. Albans (of which we just now spoke) eighty distinct works were transcribed during the reign of Henry VI.; it is mentioned as swift work; and as Henry reigned thirty-nine years, it counts up about two complete MSS. a year. And the atmosphere of St. Albans was a learned one; this locality not being overmuch given to the roisterings that belonged to Bolton Priory — of which you will remember the hint in a pleasant picture of Landseer's.

Religious Houses.

If you or I had journeyed thither in that day — coming from what land we might — I think we should have been earnest among the first things, to see those great monasteries that lay scattered over the surface of England and of Southern Scotland; — not perched on hills or other defensible positions like the Norman castles of the robber Barons — not buried in cities like London Tower, or the great halls which belonged to guilds of merchants — but planted in the greenest and loveliest of valleys, where rivers full of fish rippled within hearing, and woods full of game clothed every

headland that looked upon the valley; where the fields were the richest — where the water was purest — where the sun smote warmest; there these religious houses grew up, stone by stone, cloister by cloister, chapel by chapel, manor by manor, until there was almost a township, with outlying cottages — and some great dominating abbey church — rich in all the choicest architecture of the later Norman days — lifting its spire from among the clustered buildings scarce less lovely than itself.

Not only had learning and book-making been kept alive in these great religious houses, but the art of Agriculture. Within their walled courts were grown all manner of fruits and vegetables known to their climate; these monks knew and followed the best rulings of Cato, and Crescenzius (who just now has written on this subject in Northern Italy, and is heard of by way of Padua). They make sour wine out of grapes grown against sunny walls: they have abundant flocks too — driven out each morning from their sheltering courts, and returned each night; and they have great breadth of ground under carefullest tillage.

Of such character was Tintern Abbey — in the

valley of the Wye — now perhaps the most charming of all English ruins. Such another was Netley Abbey, on Southampton water, and Bolton Priory, close by that famous stream, the Wharfe, which you will remember in Wordsworth's story of the "White Doe of Rylstone." Fountain's Abbey, in Yorkshire, was yet another, from whose ruin we can study better perhaps than from any other in England, the extent and disposition of these old religious houses. Melrose was another; and so was Dryburgh, where Scott's body lies, and Abingdon, close upon Oxford — where was attached that Manor of Cumnor, which Scott assigns for a prison to the sad-fated Amy Robsart, in the tale of "Kenilworth." Glastonbury was another: this too (once encircled by the arms of the river Brue), was the "Isle of Avalon" in Arthurian romance;

> "Where falls not hail, or rain or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly."

Here (at Glastonbury) is still in existence the abbot's barn of the fourteenth century, and here, too, a magnificent abbot's kitchen — thirty-three feet square and seventy-two feet high: Think what the cooking

and the meats must have been in a kitchen of that style!

Now, these shrewd people who lived in these great monasteries, and built them, and enjoyed the good things kept in store there — made friends of the vassals about them; they were generous with their pot-herbs and fruits; they were the medicine-men of the neighborhood; they doled out flasks of wine to the sick; they gave sanctuary and aid to the Robin Hoods and Little Johns; and Robin Hood's men kept them in supply of venison; they enlivened their courts with minstrelsy. Warton says that at the feast of the installation of Ralph, Abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1309, seventy shillings was expended for minstrels in the gallery, and six thousand guests were present in and about the halls. Many abbeys maintained minstrels or harpers of their own; and we may be sure that the monks had jolly as well as religious ditties.

They made friends of all strong and influential people near them; their revenues were enormous. They established themselves by all the arts of conciliation. Finding among their young vassals one keener and sharper witted than his fellows, they be-

guiled him into the abbey — instructed him — perhaps made a clerk of him, for the transcription of the MSS. we have spoken of (it was thus Cædmon was brought into notice); if very promising, he might come to place of dignity among the monks — possibly grow, as Thomas à Becket did, from such humble beginnings to an archbishopric and to the mastership of the religious heart of England.

These houses were the fat corporations of that day, with their lobby-men and spokesmen in all state assemblages. Their representatives could wear hair shirts, or purple robes and golden mitres, as best suited the needs of the occasion. They could boast that their institutions were established — like our railways — for the good of the people, and in the interests of humanity; but while rendering service, waxing into such lustiness of strength and such habits of corruption and rapacity, that at last, when fully bloated, they were broken open and their riches drifted away under the whirlwind of the wrath of King Henry VIII. Great schemes of greed are very apt to carry an avenging Henry VIII. somewhere in their trail. But let us not forget that there was a time in the early centuries of Christian Eng-

land when these great religious houses — whose ruins appeal to us from their lovely solitudes — were the guardians of learning, the nurses of all new explorations into the ways of knowledge, the expounders of all healing arts, and the promoters of all charities and all neighborly kindliness.* Whatever young fellow of that day did not plant himself under shadow of one of these religious houses for growth, or did not study in the schools of Oxford or Cambridge, must needs have made his way into favor and fame and society with a lance

* An abbot presided over monasteries — sometimes independent of the bishop — sometimes (in a degree) subject. Priors also had presidence over some religious houses — but theirs was usually a delegated authority. An æsthetic abbot or prior was always building — or always getting new colors for the *missal* work in the *scriptorium:* hunting abbots were thinking more of the refectory. At least six religious services were held a day, and always midnight mass. It was easy, but not wholly a life of idleness. A bell summoned to breakfast, and bells to mass. Of a sunny day — monks were teaching boys one side of the cloister — artistic monks working at their missals the other; perhaps under such prior as he of *Jorvaulx* (Scott's Ivanhoe) some young monk would be training his hawks or dogs. An interesting abstract of the Rule of the Benedictines may be found under Monachism, *Br. Ency.*, Vol. xvi.

and good horse — just as young fellows do it now with an oar or a racket.

Life of a Damoiselle.

But what shall be said of a young person of the other sex of like age and tastes — to whose ambitions war and knight-errantry and the university cloisters are not open? Whither should the daughters of the great houses go, or how fill up the current of their young lives in that old thirteenth-century England?

It is true, there are religious houses — nunneries — priories — for these, too, with noble and saintly prioresses, such as St. Hilda's, St. Agatha's, St. Margaret's; all these bountiful in their charities, strict for most part in their discipline. To these cloistered schools may go the cousins, sisters, nieces of these saintly lady superiors; here they may learn of music, of embroidery, of letter-writing, and Christian carols — in Latin or English or French, as the case may be. If not an inmate of one of these quiet cloisters, our young thirteenth-century damsel will find large advantage in its

neighborhood; in the interchange of kindly offices — in the loan of illuminated missals, of fruits, of flowers, of haunches of venison, and in the assurance that tenderest of nurses and consolers will be at hand in case of illness or disaster; and always there — an unfailing sanctuary. At home, within the dingy towers of a castle or squat Saxon homestead, with walls hung in tapestry, or made only half bright with the fire upon the hearthstone — with slits of windows filled with horn or translucent bits of skin — there must have been wearisome *ennui*. Yet even here there were the deft handmaids, cheery and companionable; the games — draughts of a surety (in rich houses the checkers being of jasper or rock crystal); the harp, too, and the falcons for a hunting bout in fair weather; the little garden within the court — with its eglantine, its pinks, its lilies fair. Possibly there may be also transcripts of old *chansons* between ivory lids — images carven out of olive wood — relics brought to the castle by friendly knights from far-away Palestine. And travelling merchants find their way to such homes — bringing glass beads from Venice, and little dainty mirrors, just now the vogue in that

great City by the Sea; and velvet and filigree head-dresses, and jewels and bits of tapestry from Flemish cities. Perhaps a minstrel — if the revenues of the family cannot retain one — will stroll up to the castle-gates of an evening, giving foretaste of his power by a merry snatch of song about Robin Hood, or Sir Guy, or the Nut Brown Maid.

Some company of priests with a lordly abbot at their head, journeying up from St. Albans, may stop for a day, and kindle up with cheer the great hall, which will be fresh strown with aromatic herbs for the occasion; and so some solitary palmer, with scollop shell, may make the evening short with his story of travel across the desert; or — best of all — some returning knight, long looked for — half doubted — shall talk bravely of the splendors he has seen in the luxurious court of Charles of Anjou, where the chariot of his Queen was covered with velvet sprinkled with lilies of gold, and men-at-arms wore plumed helmets and jewelled collars; he may sing, too, snatches of those tender madrigals of Provence, and she — if Sister Nathalie has taught her thereto — may join in a roundelay, and the minstrel and harpist come clashing in to the *refrain*.

Then there is the home embroidery — the hemming of the robes, the trimming of the mantles, the building up of the head pieces. Pray — in what age and under what civilization — has a young woman ever failed of showing zeal in those branches of knowledge?

So, we will leave England — to-day — upon the stroke of thirteen hundred years. When we talk of life there again, we shall come very swiftly upon traces of one of her great philosophers, and of one of her great reformers, and of one of her greatest poets.

CHAPTER III.

IN our last chapter I spoke of that Geoffrey of Monmouth who about the middle of the twelfth century wrote a history — mostly apocryphal — in which was imbedded a germ of the King Arthur fables. We traced these fables, growing under the successive touches of Wace and Map and Layamon into full-fledged legends, repeated over and over; and finally, with splendid affluence of color appearing on the literary horizon of our own day. I spoke of King Richard I. and of his song loving, and of his blood loving, and of his royal frankness: then of John, that renegade brother of his — of how he granted *Magna Charta*, killed poor Prince Arthur, and stirred such a current of war as caused the loss of Normandy to England. I spoke of the connection of this loss with the consolidation of the language; of how Robert of Gloucester made a rhym-

ing history that was in a new English; of how the name of Sir John Mandeville was associated with great lies, in the same tongue; how the religious houses made books, and fattened on the best of the land, and grew corrupt; and last — of how we, if we had lived in those days, would have found disport for our idle hours and consolation for our serious ones.

Roger Bacon.

Starting now from about the same point in time where we left off, our opening scene will take us to the old University town of Oxford. It is a rare city for a young American to visit; its beautiful High Street, its quaint Colleges, its Christ Church Hall, its libraries, its Magdalen walks and tower, its charming gardens of St. John's and Trinity, its near Park of Blenheim, its fragrant memories — all, make it a place where one would wish to go and long to linger. But in the far-away time we speak of it was a walled city, with narrow streets, and filthy lodging houses; yet great parliaments had been held there; the royal domain of Woodstock was near by with its Palace; the nunnery was standing, where was edu-

cated the Fair Rosamund; a little farther away was the great religious house of Abingdon and the village of Cumnor; but of all its present august and venerable array of colleges only one or two then existed — Merton, and perhaps Balliol, or the University.*

But the schools here had won a very great reputation in the current of the thirteenth century, largely through the scholarship and popularity of Grosseteste, one while Bishop of Lincoln, who held ministrations at Oxford by reason of his connection with a Franciscan brotherhood established here; and among those crop-haired Franciscans was a monk — whom we have made this visit to Oxford to find — named Roger Bacon. He had been not only student but teacher there; and a few miles south from the King's Arms Hotel in Broad Street, Oxford, is still standing a church tower, in the little parish of Sunningwell, from which — as tradition affirms — Roger Bacon studied the heavens: for he

* College Statutes of Merton date from 1274; those of University from 1280; and of Balliol from 1282. Paper of GEORGE C. BRODERICK, *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1882.

believed in Astrology, and believed too in the transmutation of metals; and he got the name of magician, and was cashiered and imprisoned twice or thrice for this and other strange beliefs. But he believed most of all in the full utterance of his beliefs, and in experimenting, and in interrogating nature, and distrusting conventionalisms, and in search for himself into all the mysteries, whether of nature or theology.

He had sprung from worthy and well-to-do parents in the Western County of Somersetshire. He had spent very much money for those days on his education; had obtained a Doctorate at Paris; his acuteness and his capacity for study were everywhere recognized; he knew more of Greek than most of his teachers, and more of Hebrew than most of the Rabbis, and more of Chemistry and Physics generally than probably any other man in England. He took a Friar's vows, as we have said; but these did not save him from interdiction by the Chief of his Order, by whom he was placed under ten years of surveillance at Paris — his teachings silenced, and he suffering almost to starvation. A liberal Pope (for those days), Clement IV., by his intervention set

free the philosopher's pen again; and there came of this freedom the *Opus Majus* by which he is most worthily known. Subsequently he was permitted to return to his old sphere of study in Oxford, where he pursued afresh his scientific investigations, but coupled with them such outspoken denunciations of the vices and ignorance of his brother Friars, as to provoke new condemnation and an imprisonment that lasted for fourteen years — paying thus, in this accredited mediæval way, for his freedom of speech.

It is not improbable that we owe to him and to his optical studies — in some humble degree — the eye-glasses that make reading possible to old eyes: and his books, first of any books from English sources, described how sulphur and charcoal and saltpetre properly combined will make thunder and lightning (*sic facies tonitrum et coruscationem*). We call the mixture gunpowder. In his *Opus Majus* (he wrote only in Latin, and vastly more than has appeared in printed form) scholars find some of the seeds of the riper knowledges which came into the *Novum Organum* of another and later Bacon — with whom we must not confound this sharp,

eager, determined, inquiring Franciscan friar. He is worthy to be kept in mind as the Englishman who above all others living in that turbid thirteenth century, saw through the husks of things to their very core.

He died at the close of the century — probably in the year 1294; and I have gone back to that far-away time — somewhat out of our forward track — and have given you a glimpse of this Franciscan innovator and wrestler with authorities, in order that I might mate him with two other radical thinkers whose period of activity belonged to the latter half of the succeeding century: I mean Langlande and Wyclif. And before we go on to speak of these two, we will set up a few waymarks, so that we may not lose our historic bearings in the drift of the intervening years.

Bacon died, as we have said, in 1294. William Wallace fought his great battle of Cambuskenneth in 1297. Those who have read that old favorite of school-boys, Miss Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," will not need to have their memories refreshed about William Wallace. Indeed, that hero will be apt to loom too giant-like in their thought, and with a halo

about him which I suspect sober history would hardly justify. Wallace was executed at Smithfield (Miss Porter says he died of grief before the axe fell) in 1305; and that stout, flax-haired King Edward I., who had humbled Scotland at Falkirk — who was personally a match for the doughtiest of his knights — who was pious (as the times went), and had set up beautiful memorial crosses to his good Queen Eleanor — who had revived King Arthur's Round Table at Kenilworth, died only two years after he had cruelly planted the head of Wallace on London Bridge. Then came the weak Edward II., and the victories of Bruce of Bannockburn, and that weary Piers Gaveston story, and the shocking death of the King in Berkeley Castle. The visitor to Berkeley (it is in Gloucestershire, and only two miles away from station on the Midland Railway) can still see the room where the murder was done: and this Castle of Berkeley — strangely enough — has been kept in repair, and inhabited continuously from the twelfth century until now; its moat, its keep, and its warders walks are all intact.

After this Edward II. came the great Edward III. — known to us through Froissart and the Black

Prince* and Crecy and Poitiers, and by Windsor Castle — which he built — and by Chaucer and Wyclif and Langlande and Gower, who grew up while he was king; known to us also in a worse way, for outliving all his good qualities, and becoming in his last days a peevish and tempestuous voluptuary.

Some few foreign way-marks I also give, that the reader may have more distinctly in mind this great historic epoch. Dante died in exile at Ravenna, six years before Edward III. came to power. Boccaccio was then a boy of fourteen, and Petrarch nine years his elder. And on the year that Crecy was fought and won — through the prowess of the Black Prince, and when the Last of the Tribunes, as you see him in Bulwer Lytton's novel, was feeling his way to lordship in Rome, — there was living somewhere in Shropshire, a country-born, boy poet — not yet ripened into utterance, but looking out with keen eyes and soreness of heart upon the sufferings of

* The story of the Black Prince meets with revival in our day, by the recent publication of "*Le Prince Noir, Poeme du Herault d'Armes Chandos*," edited, translated, etc., by FRANCISQUE MICHEL, F.A.S. Fotheringham: London, 1884. The original MS. is understood to be preserved in the Library of Worcester College, Oxford.

poor country folk, and upon the wantonness of the monks, and the extravagance of the rich, and the hatefulness of the proud — all which was set forth at a later day in the Vision of Piers Plowman.

William Langlande.

This was William Langlande* (or Langley, as others call him), reputed author of the poem I have named. It makes a little book — earliest, I think, of all books written in English — which you will be apt to find in a well-appointed private library of our day. I won't say that it is bought to read, so much as to stand upon the shelves (so many books are) as a good and sufficient type of old respectabilities. Yet, for all this, it is reasonably readable; with crabbed alliterative rhythm; — some Latin intermixed, as if the writer had been a priest (as some

* Precise dates are wanting with respect to Langlande. Facts respecting his personal history are derived from what leaks out in his poem, and from interpolated notes (in a foreign hand) upon certain MS. copies. Of three different texts (published by the *E. E. Text Soc.*) Mr. SKEAT dates one about 1362 — a second in or about 1377, and the third still later. The first imprint has date of 1550.

allege); and such knowledge of life and of current shortcomings among all sorts of people as showed him to be a wide-awake and fearless observer. It is in the form of an Allegory, Christian in its motive; so that you might almost say that the author was an immature and crude and yet sharper kind of John Bunyan who would turn *Great-Heart* into a *Plowman.* The nomenclature also brings to mind the tinker of the Pilgrim's Progress; there is a Sir *Do-Well* and his daughter *Do-Better:* then there is *Sir In-wit* with his sons *See-well* and *Say-well* and *Hear-well,* and the doughtiest of them all — *Sir Work-well.* We may, I think, as reasonably believe that Bunyan hovered over this book, as that Milton took hints from the picture of Pandemonium attributed to Cædmon.

Langlande is a little mixed and raw oftentimes; but he is full of shrewdness and of touches of a rough and unwashed humor. There is little tenderness of poetic feeling in his verse; and scarcely ever does it rise to anything approaching stateliness; but it keeps a good dog-trot jog, as of one who knew what he was doing, and meant to do it. What he meant was — to whip the vices of the priests and to

scourge the covetousness of the rich and of the men in power. It is English all over; English * in the homeliness of its language; he makes even Norman words sound homely; English in spirit too; full of good, hearty, grumbling humor — a sort of predated and poetic kind of Protestantism. Plums might be picked out of it for the decoration of a good radical or agrarian speech of to-day.

Of his larger religious and political drift no extracts will give one a proper idea; only a reading from beginning to end will do this. One or two snatches of his verse I give, to show his manner:

> And thanne cam coveitise,
> Kan I hym naght discryve,
> So hungrily and holwe
> Sire Hervy hym loked.
> He was bitel-browed,
> And baber-lipped also
> With two blered eighen
> As a blynd hagge;
> And as a letheren purs
> Lolled his chekes,

* Not that he is specially free from foreign vocables: MARSH (*Lec. VI., Eng. Language*) gives his percentage of Anglo-Saxon words in *Passus XIV.* at only 84. See also SKEAT'S *Genl. Preface*, p. xxxiii.

Well sidder [wider] than his chyn
Thei chyveled [shrivelled] for elde;
And as a bonde-man of his bacon
His berd was bi-draveled,
With an hood on his heed,
A lousy hat above
And in a tawny tabard
Of twelf wynter age. —2847 *Pass. V.*

And again, from the same *Passus* (he dividing thus his poem into *steps* or *paces*) I cite this self-drawn picture of Envy:

Betwene manye and manye
I make debate ofte,
That bothe lif and lyme
Is lost thorugh my speche.
And when I mete hym in market
That I moost hate,
I hailse hym hendely [politely]
As I his frend were;
For he is doughtier than I,
I dar do noon oother:
Ac, hadde I maistrie and myght,
God woot my wille!
And whanne I come to the kirk
And sholde kneel to the roode,
And preye for the peple . . .
Awey fro the auter thanne
Turne I myne eighen
And bi-holde Eleyne

Hath a newe cote;
I wisshe thanne it were myn,
And al the web after.
For who so hath moore than I
That angreth me soore,
And thus I lyve love-lees,
Like a luther [mad] dogge;
That al my body bolneth [swelleth]
For bitter of my galle. — *vers.* 2667.

It is a savage picture; and as savagely true as was ever drawn of Envy. Those who cultivated the elegancies of letters, and delighted in the pretty rhyming-balance of Romance verse, would hardly have relished him; but the average thinker and worker would and did. It is specially noteworthy that the existing MSS. of this poem, of which there are very many, are without expensive ornamentation by illuminated initial letters, or otherwise, indicating that its circulation was among those who did not buy a book for its luxuries of "make-up," but for its pith. A new popularity came to the book after printing was begun, and made it known to those who sympathized with its protesting spirit; — most of all when the monasteries went down and readers saw how this old grumbler had prophesied truly —

in saying "the Abbot of Abingdon and all his people should get a knock from a king"—as they did; and a hard one it was.

Langlande was born in the West, and had wandered over the beautiful Malvern hills of Worcestershire in his day; but he went afterward to live in London, which he knew from top to bottom; had a wife there, "Kytte," and a daughter, "Calote;"* shaved his head like a priest; was tall—so tall he came to be called "Long Will." He showed little respect for fine dresses, though he saw them all; he was in London when Chaucer was there and when the greater poet was writing, and had higher-placed friends than himself; but he never met him,—from anything that appears; never met Wyclif either, with whom he must have had very much thinking

* In saying this I follow literal statement of the poem (*Pass.* xviii., 12,948), as do TYRWHIT, PRICE, and Rev. Mr. SKEAT, whose opinions overweigh the objections of Mr. WRIGHT, (*Introduction*, p. ix., note 3, to WRIGHT'S *Piers Plowman.*) The Christian name William seems determined by a find of SIR FREDERIC MADDEN on the fly-leaf of a MS. in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

Piers Plowman's Creed, often printed with the *Vision*, is now by best critics counted the work of another hand.

in common, and who also must have been in London many a time when tall Will Langlande sidled along Fenchurch Street, or Cornhill. Yet he is worthy to be named with him as representing a popular seam in that great drift of independent and critical thought, which was to ripen into the Reformation.

John Wyclif.

In the year when gunpowder was first burned in battle, and when Rienzi was trying to poise himself with a good balance on the rocking shoulders of the Roman people, John Wyclif, the great English reformer and the first translator of the Bible, was just turned of twenty and poring over his books, not improbably in that Baliol College, Oxford — of which in the ripeness of his age he was to become Master.

We know little of his early personal history, save that he came from a beautiful Yorkshire valley in the North of England, where the Tees, forming the border line of the County of Durham, sweeps past the little parish of Wyclif, and where a manor-house of the same name — traditionally the birth-

place of the Reformer — stands upon a lift of the river bank. Its grounds stretch away to those "Rokeby" woods, whose murmurs and shadows relieve the dullest of the poems of Scott.

But there is no record of him thereabout: if indeed he were born upon that lift of the Tees bank, the proprietors thereof — who through many generations were stanch Romanists — would have shown no honor to the arch-heretic; and it is noteworthy that within a chapel attached to the Wyclif manor-house, mass was said and the Pope reverenced, down to a very recent time. John Wyclif, in the great crowd of his writings, whether English or Latin, told no story of himself or of his young days. We have only clear sight of him when he has reached full manhood — when he has come to the mastership of Baliol Hall, and to eloquent advocacy of the rights and dignities of England, as against the Papal demand for tribute. On this service he goes up to London, and is heard there — maybe in Parliament; certainly is heard with such approval that he is, only a few years thereafter — sent with a commission, to treat with ambassadors from the Pope, at the old city of Bruges.

This was a rich city — called the Venice of the North — and princes and nobles from all Europe were to be met there; its great town-house even then lifted high into the air that Belfrey of Bruges which has become in our day the nestling-place of song. But Wyclif was not overawed by any splendors of scene or association. He insisted doggedly upon the rights of Englishmen as against Papal pretensions. John of Gaunt, a son of the king, stood by Wyclif; not only befriending him there, but afterward when Papish bulls were thundered against him, and when he was summoned up to London — as befell in due time — to answer for his misdeeds; and when the populace, who had caught a liking for the stalwart independence of the man, crowded through the streets (tall Will Langlande very probably among them), to stand between the Reformer and the judges of the Church. He did not believe in Ecclesiastic hierarchies; and it is quite certain that he was as little liked by the abbots and the bishops and the fat vicars, as by the Pope.

I have said he was befriended by John of Gaunt: and this is a name which it is worth while for students of English history to remember; not only be-

cause he was a brother of the famous Black Prince (and a better man than he, though he did not fight so many battles), but because he was also a good friend of the poet Chaucer — as we shall find. It will perhaps help one to keep him in mind, if I refer to that glimpse we get of him in the early scenes of Shakespeare's tragedy of Richard II., where he makes a play upon his name:

> O, how that name befits my composition!
> Old Gaunt, indeed! and gaunt in being old.
> Within me grief hath kept a tedious fast
> And who abstains from meat, that is not gaunt?

A good effigy of this John, in his robes, is on the glass of a window in All-Souls' College, Oxford.

But such great friends, and Wyclif numbered the widow of the Black Prince among them, could not shield him entirely from Romish wrath, when he began to call the Pope a "cut-purse;" and his arguments were as scathing as his epithets, and had more reason in them. He was compelled to forego his teachings at Oxford, and came to new trials, * at

* Church chroniclers who were contemporaries of WYCLIF, girded at him as a blasphemer. CAPGRAVE: *Cron. of Eng.* (*Rolls Series*), speaks of him as "the orgon of the devel, the

which — as traditions run — he wore an air of great dignity; and old portraits show us a thin, tall figure — a little bent with over-study; his features sharp-cut, with lips full of firmness, a flowing white beard and piercing eyes — glowing with the faith that was in him. This was he who blocked out the path along which England stumbled through Lollardry quagmires, and where Huss, the Bohemian, walked in after days with a clumsy, forward tread, and which Luther in his later time put all a-light with his torch of flame.

The King — and it was one of the last good deeds

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enmy of the Cherch, the confusion of men, the ydol of heresie," etc. NETTER collected his (alleged) false doctrines under title of *Bundles of Tares* (*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*), Ed. by SHIRLEY, 1858. Dr. ROBT. VAUGHAN is author of a very pleasant monograph on WYCLIF, with much topographic lore. Dr. LECHLER is a more scholarly contributor to WYCLIF literature; and the Early Eng. Text Soc. has published (1880) MATHEWS' Ed. of "*hitherto unprinted Eng. works* of WYCLIF, with notice of his life." RUDOLPH BUDDENSEIG, (of Dresden) has Ed. his polemical works in Latin (old) besides contributing an interesting notice for the anniversary just passed. Nor can I forbear naming in this connection the very eloquent quin-centenary address of Dr. RICHARD S. STORRS, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

of Edward III. — gave to the old man who was railed at by Popes and bishops, a church living at Lutterworth, a pleasant village in Leicestershire, upon a branch of that Avon, which flows by Stratford Church; and here the white-haired old man — some five hundred years ago (1384) finished his life; and here the sexton of the church will show one to-day the gown in which he preached, and the pulpit in which he stood.

Even now I have not spoken of those facts about this early Reformer, which are best kept in memory, and which make his name memorable in connection with the literature of England. In the quiet of Lutterworth he translated the Latin Bible (probably not knowing well either Greek or Hebrew, as very few did in that day); not doing all this work himself, but specially looking after the Gospels, and perhaps all of the New Testament.

The reader will, I think, be interested in a little fragment of this work of his (from Matthew viii.).

"Sothely [verily] Jhesus seeynge many cumpanyes about hym, bad *his disciplis* go ouer the watir. And oo [one] scribe or *a man of lawe*, commynge to, saide to hym — Maistre, I shall sue [follow] thee whidir euer thou shalt go. And

Jhesus said to hym, Foxis han dichis *or borrowis* [holes] and briddes of the eir han nestis; but mannes sone hath nat wher he reste his heued. Sotheli an other of his disciplis saide to hym — Lord, suffre me go first and birye my fadir. Forsothe Jhesus saide to hym, Sue thou me, and late dede men birye her dead men."

It is surely not very hard reading; — still less so in the form as revised by Purvey,* an old assistant of his in the Parish of Lutterworth; and it made the groundwork of an English sacred dialect, which with its *Thees* and *Thous* and *Speaketh* and *Heareth* and *Prayeth* has given its flavor to all succeeding translations, and to all utterances of praise and thanksgiving in every English pulpit.

Not only this, but Wyclif by his translation opened an easy English pathway into the arcana of sacred mysteries, which in all previous time — save for exceptional parts, such as the paraphrase of Cædmon, or the Ormulum, or the Psalter of Aldhelm and other fragmentary Anglo-Saxon versions of Scripture — had been veiled from the common people in the dimness of an unknown tongue. But

* Those who love books which are royal in their dignities of print and paper, will be interested in FORSHALL & MADDEN'S elegant 4to. edition of the Wyclifite versions of the Bible.

from the date of Wyclif's translation — forward, forever — whatever man, rich or poor, could read an English ordinance of the King, or a bye-law of a British parish, could also — though he might be driven to stealthy reading — spell his way back, through the old aisles of Sacred History, where Moses and the prophets held their place, and into the valleys of Palestine, where Bethlehem lay, and where Christ was hung upon the tree.

Chaucer.

Now we come to a Poet of these times; not a poet by courtesy, not a small poet, but a real and a great one. His name is Chaucer. You may not read him; you may find his speech too old-fashioned to please you; you may not easily get through its meaning; but if you do, and come to study him with any warmth, the more you study him the more you will like him. And this — not because there are curious and wonderful tales in his verse to interest you; not because your passion will be kindled by any extraordinary show of dramatic power; but because his humor, and gentleness,

and grace of touch, and exquisite harmonies of language will win upon you page by page, and story by story.

He was born — probably in London — some time during the second quarter of the fourteenth century;* and there is reason to believe that an early home of his was in or near Thames Street, which runs parallel with the river, — a region now built up and overshadowed with close lines of tall and grimy warehouses. But the boy Chaucer, living there five hundred and more years ago, might have caught between the timber houses glimpses of cultivated fields lying on the Southwark shores; and if he had wandered along Wallbrook to Cheapside, and thence westerly by Newgate to Smithfield Common — where

* The biographers used to say 1328: this is now thought inadmissible by most commentators. FURNIVAL makes the birth-year 1340— in which he is followed by the two WARDS, and by Professor MINTO (*Br. Ency.*). Evidence, however, is not as yet conclusive; and there is an even chance that further investigations may set back the birth-year to a date which will better justify and make more seemly those croakings of age which crept into some of the latter verse of the poet. For some facts looking in that direction, and for certain interesting genealogic Chaucer puzzles, see paper in *London Atheneum* for January 29, 1881, by WALTER RYE.

he may have watched tournaments that Froissart watched, and Philippa, queen of Edward III., had watched — he would have found open country; and on quiet days would have heard the birds singing there, and have seen green meadows lying on either side the river Fleet — which river is now lost in sewers, and is planted over with houses.

On Ludgate Hill, in that far-off time, rose the tall and graceful spire of old St. Paul's, and underneath its roof was a vista of Gothic arches seven hundred feet in length. The great monastery of the Templars — and of the Knights of St. John — where we go now to see that remnant of it, called the Temple Church, — had, only shortly before, passed into the keeping of the Lawyers; the Strand was like a country road, with great country-houses and gardens looking upon the water; Charing Cross was a hamlet midway between the Temple and a parish called Westminster, where a huge Abbey Church stood by the river bank.

Some biographers have labored to show that Chaucer was of high family — with titles in it. But I think we care very little about this; one story, now fully accredited, makes his father a vintner,

or wine-dealer, with a coat-of-arms, showing upon one half a red bar upon white, and upon the other white on red; as if — hints old Thomas Fuller — 'twas dashed with red wine and white. This escutcheon with its parti-colored bars may be seen in the upper left corner of the portrait of Chaucer, which hangs now in the picture-gallery at Oxford. And — for that matter — it was not a bad thing to be a vintner in that day; for we have record of one of them who, in the year after the battle of Poitiers, entertained at his house in the Vintry, Edward King of England, John King of France, David King of Scotland, and the King of Cyprus. And he not only dined them, but won their money at play; and afterward, in a very unking-like fashion — paid back the money he had won.

Chaucer was a student in his young days; but never — as old stories ran — at either Cambridge or Oxford; indeed, there is no need that we place him at one or the other. There were schools in London in those times — at St. Paul's and at Westminster — in either of which he could have come by all the scholarly epithets or allusions that appear in his earlier poems; and for the culture that declares itself in

his riper days, we know that he was more or less a student all his life — loving books, and proud of his fondness for them, and showing all up and down his poems traces of his careful reading and of an observation as close and as quick.

It is the poet's very self, who, borne away in the eagle's clutch amongst the stars, gets this comment from approving Jove *:

> Thou hearest neither that nor this,
> For when thy labor all done is,
> And hast made all thy reckiningës
> In stead of rest and of new thingës,
> Thou goest homë to thine house anon
> And all so dombe as any stone,
> Thou sittest at another bokë
> Till fully dazed is thy lokë.

But though we speak of Chaucer as bookish and scholarly, it must not be supposed that he aimed at, or possessed the nice critical discernment, with respect to the literary work of others, which we now associate with highest scholarly attainments; it may well happen that his bookish allusions are not always "by the letter," or that he may misquote, or

* *House of Fame*, Book II.

strain a point in interpretation. He lived before the days of exegetical niceties. He is attracted by large effects; he searches for what may kindle his enthusiasms, and put him upon his own trail of song. Books were nothing to him if they did not bring illumination; where he could snatch that, he burrowed — but always rather toward the light than toward the depths. He makes honey out of coarse flowers; not so sure always — nor much caring to be sure — of the name and habitudes of the plants he rifles. He stole not for the theft's sake, but for the honey's sake; and he read not for cumulation of special knowledges, but to fertilize and quicken his own spontaneities.

Nor was this poet ever so shapen to close study, but the woods or the birds or the flowers of a summery day would take the bend from his back, and straighten him for a march into the fields:

> —— There is gamë none,
> That from my bookës maketh me to gone,
> Save certainly whan that the month of Maie
> Is comen, and that I heare the foulës sing,
> And that the flowris ginnen for to spring —
> Farewell my booke, and my devocion!

And swift upon this in that musical "Legende of Good Women," comes his rhythmical crowning of the Daisy — never again, in virtue of his verse, to be discrowned —

—— above all the flowris in the mede
Thanne love I moste these flowris white and rede ;
Soche that men callin Daisies in our toun
To 'hem I have so grete affectionn
As I said erst, whan comin is the Maie,
That in my bedde there dawith me no daie
That I n' am up, and walking in the mede
To sene this floure ayenst the sunnë sprede,
As she that is of all flowris the floure,
Fulfilled of all vertue and honoure
And evir alikë faire and freshe, of hewe,
And evir I love it and ever alikë newe.

These lines of his have given an everlasting perfume to that odorless flower.

How it befell that this son of a vintner came first to have close association with members of the royal household — household of the great Edward III. — we cannot tell ; but it is certain that he did come at an early day to have position in the establishment of the King's son, Prince Lionel, Duke of Clarence ; he was sometime valet, too, of Edward III., and in

other years a familiar *protégé* of John of Gaunt — putting his poet's gloss upon courtly griefs and love-makings.

It is certain, moreover, that in the immediate service of either Prince or King, he went to the wars — as every young man of high spirit in England yearned to do, when war was so great a part of the business of life, and when the Black Prince was galloping in armor and in victory over the fields of Guienne. But it was a bad excursion the poet hit upon; he went when disaster attended the English forces; he was taken prisoner, and though ransomed shortly thereafter — as the record shows — it is uncertain when he returned; uncertain if he did not linger for years among the vineyards of France; maybe writing there his translation of the famous *Roman de la Rose* * — certainly loving this and other

* There is question of the authenticity of the translation usually attributed to Chaucer — of which there is only one fifteenth century MS. extant. Some version, however, Chaucer did make, if his own averment is to be credited. Prof. MINTO (*Br. Ency.*) accepts the well-known version; so does WARD (*Men of Letters*); Messrs. BRADSHAW (of Cambridge) and Prof. TEN BRINK doubt — a doubt in which Mr. HUMPHREY WARD (*Eng. Poets*) seems to share.

such, and growing by study of these Southern melodies into graces of his own, to overlap and adorn his Saxon sturdiness of speech.

There are recent continental critics* indeed, who claim him as French, and as finding not only his felicities of verse, but his impulse and his motives among the lilies of France. He does love these lilies of a surety; but I think he loves the English daisies better, and that it is with a thoroughly English spirit that he "powders" the meadows with their red and white, and sets among them the green blades of those island grasses, which flash upon his "morwenyngs of Maie." To these times may possibly belong — if indeed Chaucer wrote it — "The Court of Love." Into the discussion of its authenticity we do not enter; we run to cover under an ignorance which is more blissful than the wisdom that wearies itself with comparison of dates, with laws of prosody, with journeyman-like estimate of the tinklings of this or that spurt of rhyming habit. If Chaucer did not write it, we lift our hat to the unknown melodist — who can put the birds in choir — and pass on.

* SANDRAS: *Étude sur Chaucer.*

When our poet does reappear in London, it is not to tell any story of the war — of its hazards, or of its triumphs. Indeed, it is remarkable that this lissome poet, whose words like bangles shook out all tunes to his step, and who lived in the very heart of the days of Poitiers — when the doughty young Black Prince kindled a martial furor that was like the old crusade craze to follow *Cœur de Lion* to battle — remarkable, I say, that Chaucer, living on the high tide of war — living, too, in a court where he must have met Froissart, that pet of the Queen, who gloried in giving tongue to his enthusiasm about the deeds of knighthood — wonderful, I say, that Chaucer should not have brought into any of his tales or rhymes the din and the alarums and the seething passions of war. There are indeed glimpses of fluttering pennons and of spear thrusts; maybe, also, purple gouts of blood welling out from his page; but these all have the unreal look of the tourney, to which they mostly attach; he never scores martial scenes with a dagger. For all that Crécy or its smoking artillery had to do with his song, he might have sung a century earlier, or he might have sung a century later. Indeed, he does not seem to

us a man of action, notwithstanding his court connection and his somewhile official place; — not even a man of loudly declared public policy, but always the absorbed, introspective, painstaking, quiet observer, to whom Nature in the gross, with its humanities now kindled by wanton appetites, and now lifted by reverence and love (with the everlasting broidery of flowers and trees and sunshine), was always alluring him from things accidental and of the time — though it were time of royal Philip's ruin, or of a conquest of Aquitaine.

Yet withal, this Chaucer is in some sense a man of the world and courtier. The "Boke of the Duchesse" tells us this. And he can weave chaplets for those who have gone through the smoke of battles — though his own inclination may not lead him thither. To a date not very remote from that which belongs to the "Duchesse" must in all probability be assigned that other well-known minor poem of Chaucer's, called the "Parlament of Foules."*

* A notable edition is that of Prof. Lounsbury (Ginn & Heath, 1877); and it is much to be hoped that the same editor will bring his scholarly method of estimating dates, sources, and varying texts, to some more important Chaucerian labors.

There are stories of his love-lornness in his young days, and of marriage delayed and of marriage made good — coming mostly from those who paint large pictures with few pigments — and which are exceeding hazy and indeterminate of outline: his "Troilus and Cresseide" make us know that he could go through the whole gamut of love, and fawning and teasing and conquest and forgetting, in lively earnest as well as fancy — if need were.

We have better data and surer ground to go upon when we come to score his official relations. We know that when not very far advanced in age (about 1370) he went to the continent on the King's service; accomplishing it so well — presumably — that he is sent again, very shortly after, with a commission — his journey calling him to Genoa and Florence; Italy and the Mediterranean, then, probably for the first time, with all their glamour of old story, coming to his view. Some biographers make out, from chance lines in his after-poems, that he went over to Padua and saw Petrarch there, and learned of him some stories, which he afterward wrought into his garland of the Canter-

bury Tales. Possibly;* but it was not an easy journey over the mountains to Padua in those days, even if Petrarch had been domiciled there, — which is very doubtful; for the Italian poet, old and feeble, passed most of the latter years of his life at Arqua among the Euganean hills; and if Chaucer had met him, Petrarch would have been more apt to ask the man from far-away, murky England, about his country and King and the Prince Lionel (dead in those days), who only a few years before had married, at Milan, a daughter of the Visconti — than to bore him with a story at second hand (from Boccaccio) about the patient Griselda.

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* Another possible epoch of meeting with Petrarch may have been in the year 1368, when at the junketings attending the wedding of Prince Lionel (in Milan), Petrarch was present; also — perhaps — Chaucer in the suite of the Prince. FROISSART makes note of the *Feste*, but without mention of either poet, or of his own presence. *Chap. ccxlvii., Liv. I.*

WALTER BESANT (*Br. Ency., Art. Froissart*), I observe, avers the presence of all three — though without giving authorities. MURATORI (*Annali*) mentions Petrarch as seated among the princely guests — *tanta era la di lui riputazione* — but there is, naturally enough, no naming of Chaucer or Froissart.

However this may be, it is agreed by nearly all commentators, that by reason of his southward journeyings and his after-familiarity with Italian literature (if indeed this familiarity were not of earlier date), that his own poetic outlook became greatly widened, and he fell away, in large degree, from his old imitative allegiance to the jingling measures of France, and that pretty

> "Maze of to and fro,
> Where light-heeled numbers laugh and go."

Through all this time he is in receipt of favors from the Government — sometimes in the shape of direct pension — sometimes of an annual gift of wine — sometimes in moneys for payment of his costs of travel; — sometime, too, he has a money-getting place in the Customs.

John of Gaunt continues his stalwart friend. Indeed this Prince, late in life, and when he had come to the title of Duke of Lancaster, married, in third espousals, a certain Kate Swynford (*née* Roet), who, if much current tradition may be trusted, was a sister of Chaucer's wife; it was, to be sure, looked upon by court people (for various reasons) as a

match beneath the Duke; and Froissart tells us with a chirrupy air * of easy confidence (but there is no mention of the poet) that the peeresses of the court vowed they would have nothing to do with the new Duchess of Lancaster — by which it may be seen that fine ladies had then the same methods of punishing social audacities which they have now. The tradition has been given a new lease of life by the memorial window which under rule of Dean Stanley was set in Westminster Abbey; † and, however the truth may be, Chaucer's life-long familiarity in the household of Lancaster is undoubted; and it is every way likely that about the knee of the poet may have frisked and played the little Hal. (b. 1367), who came afterward to be King Henry IV. It is to this monarch, newly come to the throne, that Chaucer addresses — in his latter days, and with excel-

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* "*Nous lui lairrons toute seule faire les honneurs; nous ne irons ni viendrons en nulle place ou elle soit*," etc. — Chroniques de SIRE JEAN FROISSART (*J. A. Buchon*), tome iii., p. 236. Paris, 1835.

† "In the spandrils are the arms of Chaucer on the dexter side, and on the sinister, Chaucer impaling those of (Roet) his wife." — *Appendix III.* to FURNIVAL, *Temporary Preface*, etc.

lent effect — that little piquant snatch of verse * about the lowness of his purse:

> I am so sorrie now that ye be light,
> For certes, but ye make me heavy cheere,
> Me were as lief be laid upon my bere
> For which unto your mercie thus I crie
> Be heavie againe, or ellës mote I die.

Yet he seems never to lose his good humor or his sweet complacency; there is no carping; there is no swearing that is in earnest. His whole character we seem to see in that picture of him which his friend Occleve painted; a miniature, to be sure, and upon the cover of a MS. of Occleve's poems; but it is the best portrait of him we have. Looking at it — though 'tis only half length — you would say he was what we call a dapper man; well-fed, for he loved always the good things of life — "not drinkless altogether, as I guess;" nor yet is it a bluff English face; no beefiness; regular features — almost feminine in fineness of contour — with light beard upon upper lip and chin; smooth cheeks; lips full (rosy red, they say, in the painting); eye

* Some MSS. have this poem with title of *Supplication to King Richard.*

that is keen,* and with a sparkle of humor in it; hands decorously kept; one holding a rosary, the other pointing — and pointing as men point who see what they point at, and make others see it too; his hood, which seems a part of his woollen dress, is picturesquely drawn about his head, revealing only a streak of hair over his temple; you see it is one who studies picturesqueness even in costume, and to the trimming of his beard into a forked shape; — no lint on his robe — you may be sure of that; — no carelessness anywhere: dainty, delicate, studious of effects, but with mirth and good nature shimmering over his face. Yet no vagueness or shakiness of purpose show their weak lines; and in his jaw there is a certain staying power that kept him firm and active and made him pile book upon book in the new, sweet English tongue, which out of the dialects of Essex and of the East of England he had compounded, ordered, and perfected, and made the pride of every man born to the inheritance of that Island speech.

* This — in the engraving; the autotype published by the Chaucer Society gives, unfortunately, a very blurred effect to the upper part of the face: but who can doubt the real quality of Chaucer's eye?

And it is with such looks and such forces and such a constitutional cheeriness, that this blithe poet comes to the task of enchaining together his Canterbury Tales, with their shrewd trappings of Prologue — his best work, getting its last best touches after he is fairly turned of middle age, if indeed he were not already among the sixties. Is it not wonderful — the distinctness with which we see, after five hundred years have passed, those nine and twenty pilgrims setting out on the sweet April day, to travel down through the country highways and meadows of Kĕnt!

The fields are all green, "y-powdered with daisies;" the birds are singing; the white blossoms are beginning to show upon the hedge-rows. And the Pilgrims, one and all, are so touched and colored by his shrewdness and aptness of epithet that we see them as plainly as if they had been cut out, figure by figure, from the very middle of that far-away century.

There goes the Knight —

> And that a worthy man,
> That from the timĕ that he first bĕgan
> To ryden out, he lovĕd chyvalrie
> Trouth and honoŭr, freedom and courtesie.

And after him his son, the Squire, the bright bachelor, who

> Was as fresh as is the month of May;
> Schort was his goune, with sleevës long and wide,
> Well coude hè sit on hors. and fairë ride.
> He coudë songës make and wel endite,
> Joust and eke dance, and wel portray and write.

Then there comes the charming Prioress —

> Ycleped Madame Eglantine.
> Ful well she sang the servicë divine,
> Entunëd in hir nose ful semëly:
> And Frensch she spak ful fair and fetisly,
> After the scole of Stratford attë Bowe,
> For Frensch of Paris was to hir unknowe.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Full fetys was her cloke, as I was waar
> Of smal coral aboute hir arme she baar
> A paire of bedës gauded all with grene,
> And thereon heng a broch of gold ful schene
> On which was first y-writ a crownéd A,
> And after — *Amor Vincit Omnia!*

Then comes the Monk, who has a shiny pate, who is stout, well fed, pretentious; his very trappings make a portrait —

> And when he rocd, men might his bridel heere
> Gingling in a whistlyng wynd as cleere
> And eek as loude as doth the chapel belle.

Again, there was a Friar — a wanton and a merry one — rollicksome, and loving rich houses only,

> —— who lispéd for his wantonnesse,
> To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
> His eyen twinkled in his hed aright
> As do the starrës in the frosty night.

And among them all goes, with mincing step, the middle-aged, vulgar, well-preserved, coquettish, shrewish Wife of Bath:

> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streyte y-tied, and schoos ful moiste and newe,
> Bold was her face, and faire and reed of hewe.

And so — on, and yet on — for the twenty or more; all touched with those little, life-like strokes which only genius can command, and which keep the breath in those old Pilgrims to Canterbury, as if they travelled there, between the blooming hedge-rows, on every sunshiny day of every succeeding spring.

I know that praise of these and of the way Chaucer marshals them at the Tabard, and starts them on their way, and makes them tell their stories, is like praise of June or of sunshine. All poets and all readers have spoken it ever since the morning they set out upon their journeyings; and many an Amer-

ican voyager of our day has found best illumination for that pleasant jaunt through County Kent toward the old towers of Canterbury in his recollections of Chaucer's Pilgrims. It is true that the poet's way-side marks are not close or strong; no more does a meteor leave other track than the memory of its brightness. We cannot fix of a surety upon the "ale-stake" where the Pardoner did "byten on a cake," and there may be some doubt about the "litel" town

> which that y-cleped is, Bob-up-and-Down.

But there is no doubt at all about the old Watling Road and Deptford, and the sight of Greenwich Heights, which must have shown a lifted forest away to their left; nor about Boughton Hill (by Boughton-under-Blean), with its far-off view of sea-water and of sails, and its nearer view of the great cathedral dominating Canterbury town. Up to the year 1874 the traveller might have found a Tabard * tavern in Southwark, which

* The name, indeed, by some strange metonymy not easily explicable, had become "Talbot." There is a later "Tabard," dreadfully new, on the corner of "Talbot Inn Yard," 85 High Street, Borough.

at about 1600 had replaced the old inn that Chaucer knew; but it repeated the old quaintness, and with its lumbering balconies and littered court and droll signs, and its saggings and slants and smells, carried one back delightfully to fourteenth-century times. And in Canterbury, at the end of the two or three days'* pilgrim journey, one can set foot in very earnest upon the pavement these people from the Tabard trod, under the cathedral arches — looking after the tomb of the great Black Prince, and the scene of the slaughter of Thomas à Becket. In that quaint old town, too, are gables under which some of these story-tellers of the Pilgrimage may have lodged; and (mingling old tales with new) there are latticed casements out of which Agnes Wickfield may have looked, and sidewalks where David Copperfield may have accommodated his boy-step to the lounging pace of the always imminent Micawber. Yet it is in the country outside and in scenes the poet loved best, that the aroma of the Canterbury Tales will be caught most surely; and it is

* Dean Stanley, without doubt in error, in measuring the pilgrimage by twenty-four hours. See *Temp. Pref. to Six Text Edit.* FURNIVAL.

among those picturesque undulations of land which lie a little westward of Harbledown — upon the Rochester road, which winds among patches of wood, and green stretches of grass and billowy hop-gardens, that the lover of Chaucer will have most distinctly in his ear the jingle of the "bridel" of the Monk, and in his eye the scarlet hosen and the wimple of the Wife of Bath.

Yet these Canterbury Tales convey something in them and about them beside delicacies; the host, who is master of ceremonies, throws mud at a grievous rate, and with a vigorous and a dirty hand. Boccaccio's indecencies lose nothing of their quality in the smirched rhyme of the Reeve's tale;* the Miller is not presentable in any decent company, and the Wife of Bath is vulgar and unseemly. There are others, to be sure, and enough, who have only gracious and grateful speech put into their mouths; and it is these we cherish. The stories, indeed, which these pilgrims tell, are not much in themselves; stolen, too, the most of them; stolen, just

* *Nov. VI. Giorn. IX.* It may be open to question if Chaucer took scent from this trail, or from some as malodorous *Fr. Fabliau* — as TYRWHITT and WRIGHT suggest. The quest is not a savory one.

as Homer stole the current stories about Ajax and Ulysses; just as Boccaccio stole from the *Gesta Romanorum;* just as Shakespeare stole from the Cymric fables about King Lear and Cymbeline. He stole; but so did everyone who could get hold of a good manuscript. Imagine — if all books were in such form now, and MSS. as few and sparse as then, what a range for enterprising authors! But Chaucer stole nothing that he did not improve and make his own by the beauties he added.

Take that old slight legend (everywhere current in the north of England) of the little Christian boy, who was murdered by Jews, because he sang songs in honor of the Virgin; and who — after death — still sang, and so discovered his murderers. It is a bare rag of story, with only streaks of blood-red in it; yet how tenderly touched, and how pathetically told, in Chaucer's tale of the Prioress!

It is a widow's son — "sevene yeres of age" — and wheresoe'er he saw the image

> Of Christe's moder, had he in usage,
> As him was taught, to knele adown and say
> His *Are Marie!* as he goth by the way.
> Thus hath this widowe hire litel son y-taught
> To worship aye, and he forgat it naughte.

And the "litel" fellow, with his quick ear, hears at school some day the *Alma Redemptoris* sung; and he asks what the beautiful song may mean? He says he will learn it before Christmas, that he may say it to his "moder dere." His fellows help him word by word — line by line — till he gets it on his tongue:

> From word to word, acording with the note,
> Twiës a day, it passed thro' his throte.

At last he has it trippingly; so — schoolward and homeward,

> as he cam to and fro
> Full merrily than would he sing and crie,
> O *Alma Redemptoris* ever mó,
> The sweetnesse hath his hertë perced so.

Through the Jews' quarter he goes one day, singing this sweet song that bubbles from him as he walks; and they — set on by Satan, who "hath in Jewe's herte his waspës nest" — conspire and plot, and lay hold on him, and cut his throat, and cast him into a pit.

But — a wonder — a miracle! — still from the bleeding throat, even when life is gone, comes the tender song, "*O Alma Redemptoris!*" And the

wretched mother, wandering and wailing, is led by the sweet, plaintive echoes, whose tones she knows, to where her poor boy lies dead; and even as she comes, he, with throte y-carven, his

> *Alma Redemptoris* gan to sing
> So loude that al the placë gan to ring.

Then the Christian people take him up, and bear him away to the Abbey. His mother lies swooning by the bier. They hang those wicked Jews — and prepare the little body for burial and sprinkle it with holy water; but still from the poor bleeding throat comes "evermo'" the song:

> *O Alma Redemptoris mater!*

And the good Abbot entreats him to say, why his soul lingers, with his throat thus all agape?

> "My throte is cut unto my nekkë bone,"
> Saidë this child, "and as by way of kynde,
> I should have dyed, ye longë time agone,
> But Jesu Christ, as ye in bookës finde,
> Wol that his glory laste, and be in minde,
> And for the worship of his moder dere,
> Yet may I sing, '*O Alma!*' loud and clere."

But he says that as he received his death-blow, the Virgin came, and

"Methoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tongue,
Wherefore I singe and singe ; I mote certeyn
Til from my tonge off-taken is the greyn ;
And after that, thus saidë she to me,
'My litel child, then wol I fecchen thee!'"
[Where at] This holy monk — this Abbot — him mene I,
His tonge out-caughte, and tok away the greyn,
And he gaf up the goost full softëly.
. . . . . .
And when the Abbot had this wonder sein
His saltë teres trillëd adown as raine,
And graf he fell, all platt upon the grounde,
And stille he lay as he had been y-bounde.

After this they take away the boy-martyr from off his bier —

And in a tombe of marble stonës clere
Enclosen they his litel body swete ;
Ther he is now : God leve us for to mete !

How tenderly the words all match to the delicate meaning! This delightful poet knows every finest resource of language : he subdues and trails after him all its harmonies. No grimalkin stretching out silken paws touches so lightly what he wants only to touch ; no cat with sharpest claws clings so tenaciously to what he would grip with his earnester words. He is a painter whose technique is never at fault — whose art is an instinct.

Yet — it must be said — there is no grand horizon at the back of his pictures: pleasant May-mornings and green meadows a plenty; pathetic episodes, most beguiling tracery of incidents and of character, but never strong, passionate outbursts showing profound capacity for measurement of deepest emotion. We cannot think of him as telling with any adequate force the story of King Lear, in his delirium of wrath: Macbeth's stride and hushed madness and bated breath could not come into the charming, mellifluous rhythm of Chaucer's most tragic story without making a dissonance that would be screaming.

But his descriptions of all country things are garden-sweet. He touches the daisies and the roses with tints that keep them always in freshest, virgin, dewy bloom; and he fetches the forest to our eye with words that are brim-full of the odors of the woods and of the waving of green boughs.

In our next talk we shall speak of some who sang beside him, and of some who followed; but of these not one had so rare a language, and not one had so true an eye.

CHAPTER IV.

IN our last chapter we went back to the latter edge of the thirteenth century and to the City of Oxford, that we might find in that time and place a Franciscan Friar — known as Roger Bacon, who had an independence of spirit which brought him into difficulties, and a searchingness of mind which made people count him a magician. I spoke of Langlande and Wyclif: and of how the reforming spirit of the first expressed itself in the alliterative rhythm of the Piers Plowman allegory; and how the latter declared against Papal tyranny and the accepted dogmas of the Church: he too, set on foot those companies of "pore priests," who in long russet gowns reaching to their heels, and with staff in hand, traversed the highways and byways of England, preaching humility and charity; he gave to us moreover that Scriptural quaintness of language,

which from Wyclif's time, down to ours, has left its trail in every English pulpit, and colored every English prayer.

Then we came to that great poet Chaucer, who wrote so much and so well, as — first and most of all contemporary or preceding writers — to make one proud of the new English tongue. He died in 1400, and was buried at Westminster — not a stone's throw away from the site of his last London home. His tomb, under its Gothic screen, may be found in the Poet's Corner of the Abbey, a little to the right, on entering from the Old Palace Yard; and over it, in a window that looks toward the Houses of Parliament, has been set — in these latter years, in unfading array — the gay company of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims.

In the same year in which the poet died, died also that handsome and unfortunate Richard the Second* (son of the Black Prince) who promised bravely; who seemed almost an heroic figure when in his young days, he confronted Wat Tyler so coolly; but he made promises he could not or would

* His dethronement preceded his death, by a twelvemonth or more.

not keep — slipped into the enthralment of royalties against which Lollard and democratic malcontents bayed in vain: there were court cabals that overset him; Shakespeare has told his story, and in that tragedy — lighted with brilliant passages — John of Gaunt, brother to the Black Prince, appears, old, and gray and near his grave; and his son — the crafty but resolute Henry Bolingbroke — comes on the stage as Henry IV. to take the "brittle glory" of the crown.

Of Gower and Froissart.

But I must not leave Chaucer's immediate times, without speaking of other men who belonged there: the first is John Gower — a poet whom I name from a sense of duty rather than from any special liking for what he wrote. He was a man of learning for those days — having a good estate too, and living in an orderly Kentish home, to which he went back and forth in an eight-oared barge upon the Thames. He wrote a long Latin poem *Vox Clamantis,* in which like Langlande he declaimed against the vices and pretensions of the clergy; and he also treated in the high-toned conservative way of a

well-to-do country gentleman, the social troubles of the time, which had broken out into Wat Tyler and Jack Straw rebellions; — people should be wise and discreet and religious; then, such troubles would not come.

A better known poem of Gower — because written in English — was the *Confessio Amantis:* Old Classic, and Romance tales come into it, and are fearfully stretched out; and there are pedagogic Latin rubrics at the margin, and wearisome repetitions, with now and then faint scent of prettinesses stolen from French *fabliaux:* but unless your patience is heroic, you will grow tired of him; and the monotonous, measured, metallic jingle of his best verse is provokingly like the "Caw-caw" of the prim, black raven. He had art, he had learning, he had good-will; but he could not weave words into the thrush-like melodies of Chaucer. Even the clear and beautiful type of the Bell & Daldy edition* does not make him entertaining. You will tire before

* Edited by Dr. Reinhold Pauli London, 1857. Henry Morley (*Eng. Writers*, IV., p. 238) enumerates a score or more of existing MSS. of the poem. The first printed edition was that of Caxton, 1483.

you are half through the Prologue, which is as long, and stiff as many a sermon. And if you skip to the stories, they will not win you to liveliness: Pauline's grace, and mishaps are dull; and the sharp, tragic twang about Gurmunde's skull, and the vengeance of Rosemunde (from the old legend which Paul the Deacon tells) does not wake one's blood.

In his later years he was religiously inclined; was a patron and, for a time, resident of the Priory which was attached to the church, now known as St. Saviour's, and standing opposite to the London Bridge Station in Southwark. In that church may now be found the tomb of Gower and his effigy in stone, with his head resting on "the likeness of three books which he compiled."

Perhaps I have no right to speak of Froissart, because he was a Fleming, and did not write in English; but Lord Berners' spirited translation of his Chronicle (1523) has made it an English classic: * moreover, Froissart was very much in London; he was a great pet of the Queen of Ed-

* A more modern and accepted translation — by a wealthy Welsh gentleman, Thos. Johnes — was luxuriously printed on his private press at Hafod, Cardiganshire, in 1803.

ward III.; he had free range of the palace; he described great fêtes that were given at Windsor, and tournaments on what is now Cheapside; a reporter of our day could not have described these things better: he went into Scotland too — the Queen Philippa giving him his outfit — and stayed with the brave Douglas "much time," and tells us of Stirling and of Melrose Abbey. Indeed, he was a great traveller. He was at Milan when Prince Clarence of England married one of the great Visconti (Chaucer possibly there also, and Petrarch of a certainty); he was at Rome, at Florence, at Bordeaux with the Black Prince, when his son Richard II. was born; was long in the household of Gaston de Foix: we are inclined to forget, as we read him, that he was a priest, and had his parochial charge somewhere along the low banks of the Scheldt: in fact, we suspect that he forgot it himself.

He not only wrote Chronicles, but poems; and he tells us, that on his last visit to England, he presented a copy of these latter — beautifully illuminated, engrossed by his own hand, bound in crimson velvet, and embellished with silver clasps, bosses,

and golden roses — to King Richard II.; and the King asked him what it was all about; and he said — "About Love;" whereat, he says, the King seemed much pleased, and dipped into it, here and there — for "he could read French as well as speak it."

Altogether, this rambling, and popular Froissart was, in many points, what we should call an exquisite fellow; knowing, and liking to know, only knights and nobles, and flattering them to the full; receiving kindly invitations wherever he went; overcome with the pressure of his engagements; going about in the latest fashion of doublet; somewhiles leading a fine greyhound in leash, and presenting five or six of the same to his friend the Comte de Foix (who had a great love for dogs); never going near enough to the front in battle to get any very hard raps; ready with a song or a story always; pulling a long bow with infinite grace. Well — the pretty poems he thought so much of, nobody knows — nobody cares for: they have never, I think, been published in their entirety:* But, his Journal — his notes of what he saw and

* There is a manuscript copy in the (so called) *Bibliothèque du Roi* at Paris. A certain number — among them, the *Espi-*

heard, clapped down night by night, in hostelries or in tent — perhaps on horseback — are cherished of all men, and must be reckoned the liveliest, if not the best of all chronicles of his time. He died in the first decade of that fifteenth century on which we open our British march to-day; and, at the outset, I call attention to a little nest of dates, which from their lying so close together, can be easily kept in mind. Richard II. son of the Black Prince, died — a disgraced prisoner — in 1400. John of Gaunt, his uncle, friend of Chaucer, died the previous year: while Chaucer, Froissart and John Gower all died in less than ten years thereafter; thus, the century opens with a group of great deaths.

Two Henrys and Two Poets.

That Henry IV. who appears now upon the throne, and who was not a very noticeable man, save for his kingship, you will remember as the little son of John of Gaunt, who played about Chaucer's knee; you will remember him further

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nette Amoureuse — appear in the *Buchon* edition of the *Chroniques;* Paris, 1835.

as giving title to a pair of Shakespeare's plays, in which appears for the first time that semi-historic character — that enormous wallet of flesh, that egregious villain, that man of a prodigious humor, all in one — Jack Falstaff. And this famous, fat Knight of Literature shall introduce us to Prince Hal who, according to traditions (much doubted nowadays), was a wild boy in his youth, and boon companion of such as Falstaff; but, afterward, became the brave and cruel, but steady and magnificent Henry V. Yet we shall never forget those early days of his, when at Gad's Hill, he plots with Falstaff and his fellows, to waylay travellers bound to London, with plump purses. Before the plot is carried out, the Prince agrees privately with Poins (one of the rogues) to put a trick upon Falstaff: Poins and the Prince will slip away in the dusk — let Falstaff and his companions do the robbing; then, suddenly — disguised in buckram suits — pounce on them and seize the booty. This, the Prince and Poins do: and at the first onset of these latter, the fat Knight runs off, as fast as his great hulk will let him, and goes spluttering and puffing to a near tavern, where — after consuming "an intolerable deal of sack" —

he is confronted by the Prince, who demands his share of the spoils. But the big Knight blurts out — "A plague on all cowards!" He has been beset, while the Prince had sneaked away; the spoils are gone:

"I am a rogue, if I was not at half a sword with a dozen of them two hours together; I have scaped by a miracle; I am eight times thrust thro' the doublet — four thro' the hose. My sword is hacked like a hand-saw. If I fought not with fifty of them, then am I a bunch of radish. If there were not two or three and fifty on poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature."

"Pray God, [says the Prince, keeping down his laughter] you have not murdered some of them!"

Falstaff. Nay, that's past praying for; for I peppered two of them — two rogues in buckram. Here I lay, and thus I bore my sword. Four rogues in buckram let drive at me.

Prince. What, four? thou said'st two.

Falstaff. Four, Hal; I told thee four.

And Poins comes to his aid, with — "Ay, he said four." Whereat the fat Knight takes courage; the men in buckram growing, in whimsical stretch to seven, and nine; he, paltering and swearing, and never losing his delicious insolent swagger, till at last the Prince declares the truth, and makes show of the booty. You think this coward Falstaff may lose heart at this; not a whit of it; his eye, roll-

ing in fat, does not blink even, while the Prince unravels the story; but at the end the stout Knight hitches up his waistband, smacks his lips :—

"D'ye think I did not know ye, my masters? Should I turn upon the true Prince? Why thou knowest I am as valiant as Hercules; but beware instinct: I was a coward on instinct."

So runs the Shakespearean scene, of which I give this glimpse only as a remembrancer of Henry IV., and his possibly wayward son.

If we keep by the strict letter of history, there is little of literary interest in that short reign of his — only fourteen years. Occleve, a poet of whom I spoke as having painted a portrait of Chaucer (which I tried to describe to you) is worth mentioning — were it only for this. Lydgate,* of about the same date, was a more fertile poet; wrote so easily indeed, that he was tempted to write too much. But he had the art of choosing taking subjects, and so, was vastly popular. He had excellent training, both English and Continental; he was a priest, though sometimes a naughty one; and he opened a school at his monastery of St. Edmunds.

* John Lydgate: dates of birth and death unsettled.

A few fragments of that monastery are still to be seen in the ancient town of Bury St. Edmunds: — a town you may remember in a profane way, as the scene of certain nocturnal adventures that befel, in our time, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller.

Notable amongst the minor poems of this old Bury monk, is a jingling ballad called *London Lickpenny*, in which a poor suitor pushing his way into London courts, is hustled about, has his hood stolen, wanders hither and yon, with stout cries of "ripe strawberries" and "hot sheepes feete" shrilling in his ears; is beset by taverners and thievish thread-sellers, and is glad to get himself away again into Kent, and there digest the broad, and ever good moral that a man's pennies get "licked" out of him fast in London. Remembering that this was at the very epoch when Nym and Bardolph frequented the Boar's Head, Eastcheap, and cracked jokes and oaths with Dame Quickly and Doll Tearsheet, and we are more grateful for the old rhyming priest's realistic bit of London sights, than for all his classics,* or all his stories of the saints.

* *The Storie of Thebe* and *the Troy booke* were among his ambitious works. Skeat gives his epoch "about 1420," and

But at the very time this Lydgate was writing, a tenderer and sweeter voice was warbling music out of a prison window at Windsor; and the music has come down to us: *

> "Beauty enough to make a world to doat,
> And when she walkèd had a little thraw
> Under the sweet grene bowis bent,
> Her fair freshe face, as white as any snaw
> She turnèd has, and forth her way is went;
> But then begun my achès and torment
> To see her part, and follow I na might;
> Methought the day was turnèd into night."

There is a royal touch in that, and it comes from a royal hand — that of Prince James of Scotland, who, taken prisoner by Henry IV., was held fast for sixteen years in the keep of Windsor Castle. Mr.

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cites *London Lickpenny* — copying from the Harleian MS. (367) in the British Museum.

* James I. (of Scotland), b. 1394 and was murdered 1437. *The King's Quair*, from which quotation is made, was written in 1423. It is a poem of nearly 1400 lines, of which only one MS. exists — in the Bodleian Library.

An edition by Chalmers (1824) embodies many errors: the only trustworthy reading is that edited by the Rev. Walter Skeat for the Scottish Text Soc. (1883-4). A certain *modernizing* belongs of course to the citation I make — as well as to many others I have made and shall make.

Irving has made him the subject of a very pleasant paper in the Sketch-book. Though a prince, he was a poet by nature, and from the window of his prison did see the fair lady whose graces were garnered in the verse I have cited; and oddly enough, he did come to marry the subject of this very poem (who was related to the royal house of England, being grand-daughter of John of Gaunt) and thereafter did come to be King of Scotland and — what was a commoner fate — to be assassinated. That queen of his, of whom the wooing had been so romantic and left its record in the *King's Quair* — made a tender and devoted wife — threw herself at last between him and the assassins — receiving grievous wounds thereby, but all vainly — and the poor poet-king was murdered in her presence at Perth, in the year 1437.

These three poets I have named all plumed their wings to make that great flight by which Chaucer had swept into the Empyrean of Song: but not one of them was equal to it: nor, thenceforward all down through the century, did any man sing as Chaucer had sung. There were poetasters; there were rhyming chroniclers; and toward the end of

the century there appeared a poet of more pretension, but with few of the graces we find in the author of the Canterbury Tales.

John Skelton * was his name: he too a priest living in Norfolk. His rhymes, as he tells us himself, were "ragged and jagged:" but worse than this, they were often ribald and rabid — attacking with fierceness Cardinal Wolsey — attacking his fellow-priests too — so that he was compelled to leave his living: but he somehow won a place afterward in the royal household as tutor; and even the great Erasmus (who had come over from the Low Countries, and was one while teaching Greek at Cambridge) congratulates some prince of the royal family upon the great advantage they have in the services of such a "special light and ornament of British literature." He is capricious, homely, never weak, often coarse, always quaint. From out his curious trick-track of verse, I pluck this little musical canzonet: —

"Merry Margaret
As midsummer flower;

* Priest at Diss in Norfolk, b. (about) 1460; d. 1529. Best edition of works edited by Rev. A. Dyce. 1843.

Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower:
With solace and gladness
Much mirth and no madness,
All good and no badness,
So joyously,
So maidenly,
So womanly
Her demeaning
In everything
Far, far passing
That I can indite
Or suffice to write
Of merry Margaret
As midsummer flower
Gentle as falcon
Or hawk of the tower:
Stedfast of thought
Well-made well-wrought;
Far may be sought
Ere you can find
So courteous — so kind
As merry Margaret
This midsummer flower."

There is a pretty poetic perfume in this — a merry musical jingle; but it gives no echo even of the tendernesses which wrapped all round and round the story of the Sad Griselda.

Henry V. and War Times.

This fifteenth century — in no chink of which, as would seem, could any brave or sweet English poem find root-hold, was not a bald one in British annals. There were great men of war in it: Henry V. and Bedford * and Warwick and Talbot and Richard III. all wrote bloody legends with their swords across French plains, or across English meadows.

Normandy, which had slipped out of British hands — as you remember — under King John, was won again by the masterly blows Henry V. struck at Agincourt and otherwheres. Shakespeare has given an historic picture of this campaign, which will be apt to outlive any contemporary chronicle. Falstaff disappears from sight, and his old crony the dissolute Prince Hal comes upon the scene as the conquering and steady-going King.

Through all the drama — from the "proud hoofs"

* Bedford (when Regent of France) is supposed to have transported to England the famous Louvre Library of Charles V. (of France). There were 910 vols., according to the catalogue drawn up by Gilles Mallet — "the greater number written on fine vellum and magnificently bound."

of the war-horses, prancing in the prologue, to the last chorus, the lurid blaze of battle is threatening or shining. Never were the pomp and circumstance of war so contained within the pages of a play. For ever so little space — in gaps of the reading — between the vulgar wit of Nym, and the Welsh jargon of Fluellen, you hear the crack of artillery, and see shivered spears and tossing plumes. In the mid scenes, vast ranks of men sweep under your vision, and crash against opposing ranks, and break, and dissolve away in the hot swirl of battle. And by way of artistic contrast to all this, comes at last, in the closing pages, that piquant, homely, strange coquettish love-scene, which — historically true in its main details — joined the fortunes of England and of France in the persons of King Henry and Katharine of Valois. You will not be sorry to have a glimpse of this Shakespearean and historic love-making: The decisive battle has been fought: the French King is prisoner: Henry has the game in his own hands. It is a condition of peace that he and the fair Katharine — daughter of France — shall join hands in marriage; and Henry in his blunt war way sets about his wooing: —

"O fair Katharine, if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue. Do you like me, Kate?"

Kate. *Pardonnez moi*; I cannot tell vat is—*like me.*

King. [Explosively and deliciously.] An angel is like you, Kate; and you are like an angel: faith, I'm glad thou can'st speak no better English: for if thou could'st thou would'st find me such a plain King, that thou would'st think I had sold my farm to buy my crown. If you would put me to verses, or to dance for your sake, Kate, why you undid me. I speak plain soldier. If thou can'st love me for this—take me: if not—to say to thee that I shall die, is true: but—for thy love—by the Lord, no. Yet I love thee too. And whil'st thou livest, Kate, take a fellow of a plain uncoined constancy: a straight-back will stoop; but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon; or rather the sun and not the moon, for it shines bright and never changes. If thou would'st have such a one, take me!

Kate. Is it possible dat I should love de enemy of France?

King. No, it's not possible, Kate: but in loving me you would love the friend of France, for I love France so well, that I will not part with a village of it: I will have it all mine: and, Kate, when France is mine, and I am yours, then yours is France and you are mine. But, Kate, dost thou understand thus much English—Can'st thou love me?

Kate. I cannot tell.

King. Can any of your neighbors tell, Kate?

Kate. I do not know dat.

King. By mine honor, in true English, I love thee, Kate: by which honor, I dare not swear thou lovest me:

yet my blood begins to flatter me, that thou dost. Wilt thou have me Kate?

Kate. That is as it shall please *le roy mon Père.*

King. Nay it will please him well, Kate. It *shall* please him, Kate, and upon that, I kiss your hand and call you "my Queen."

Kate. Dat is not de fashion *pour les ladies* of France — to kiss before marriage.

King. O Kate, [loftily] *nice customs courtesy to great Kings:* — here comes your father.

And these two *did* marry; the Queen being — as Shakespeare represents — in a large sense, the spoil of war. Out of this union sprung the next King, Henry VI., crowned when an infant. But this does not close the story of Katharine: three years after the King's death, she married a Welsh knight — named Sir Owen Tudor. (He, poor man, lost his head, some years after, for his temerity in marrying a King's widow.) But from the second marriage of Katharine, was born a son who became the father of that Henry VII., who sixty years later conquered Richard III. on Bosworth field — brought to an end the wars of York and Lancaster, and gave his own surname of Tudor to his son Henry VIII., to the great Elizabeth and to bloody Mary.

Seeing thus how the name of Tudor came

into the royal family, through that Katharine of Valois, whose courtship is written in the play of Henry V., I will try on the same page to fasten in mind the cause of the great civil wars of York and Lancaster, or of the white and red roses, which desolated England in the heart of the fifteenth century.*

You will recall my having spoken of Chaucer as a favorite in the household of John of Gaunt, and as an inmate also in the household of John's older brother, Lionel. You will remember, too, that Henry IV., son of John of Gaunt, succeeded the hapless and handsome Richard II. on the throne; but his right was disputed, and with a great deal of reason, by the heirs of the older brother, Lionel (who had title of Duke of Clarence). There was not however power and courage enough to contest the claim, until the kingship of young Henry VI. — crowned when an infant — offered opportunity. Thereafter and thereby came the broils, the apprehensions, the doubts, the conspiracies, the battles, which made England one of the worst of places to

* 1455 to 1485.

live in: all this bitterness between York and Lancaster growing out of the rival claims of the heirs of our old acquaintances Lionel and John of Gaunt, whom we met in the days of Chaucer.

Joan of Arc and Richard III.

If we look for any literary illumination of this period, we shall scarce find it, except we go again to the historic plays of Shakespeare: The career of Henry VI. supplies to him the ground-work for three dramas: the first, dealing with the English armies in France, which, after Henry V.'s death are beaten back and forth by French forces, waked to new bravery under the strange enthusiasm and heroic leadership of Joan of Arc. Of course she comes in for her picture in Shakespeare's story: but he gives us an ignoble one (though not so bad as Voltaire's in the ribald poem of *La Pucelle*).

No Englishman of that day, or of Shakespeare's day, could do justice to the fiery, Gallic courage, the self-devotion, the religious ennoblement of that earnest, gallant soul who was called the Maid of Orleans. A far better notion of her presence and

power than Shakespeare gave is brought to mind by that recent French painting of Bastien-Lepage — so well known by engraving — which aims to set forth the vision and the voices that came to her amid the forest silence and shadows. Amid those shadows she stands — startled: a strong, sweet figure of a peasant maiden; stoutly clad and simply; capable of harvest-work with the strongest of her sisterhood; yet not coarse; redeemed through every fibre of body and soul by a light that shines in her eye, looking dreamily upward; seeing things others see not; hoping things others hope not, and with clenched hand putting emphasis to the purpose — which the hope and the vision kindle; pitying her poor France, and nerved to help her — as she did — all the weary and the troublesome days through, till the shameful sacrifice at English hands, on the market-place of Rouen, closed her life and her story.

The two closing portions of the Henry VI. dramas relate to home concerns. There is much blood in them and tedium too (if one dare say this), and flashes of wit — a crazy tangle of white and red roses in that English garden—cleared up at last in Shake-

speare's own way, when Richard III.* comes, in drama of his own, and crookedness, and Satanry of his own, and laughs his mocking laugh over the corpses he makes of kings and queens and princes; and at last in Bosworth field, upon the borders of Warwickshire and near to the old Roman Watling Street, the wicked hunchback, fighting like a demon, goes down under the sword-thrust of that Henry (VII.) of Richmond, who, as I have said, was grandson to Katharine of Valois, of the coquettish courtship.

No chronicler of them all, commonplace or painstaking as he might be, has so planted the image of the crooked Richard III. in men's minds as Shakespeare: though it is to be feared that he used somewhat too much blood in the coloring; and doubtful if the hump-backed king was quite the monster which Garrick, Booth, and Macready have made of him.

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* Miss Halsted in her *Richard III.*, chap. viii. (following the *Historic Doubts* of Horace Walpole), makes a kindly attempt to overset the Shakespearean view of Richard's character—in which, however, it must be said that she is only very moderately successful. See also a more recent effort in the same direction by Alfred O. Legge (*The Unpopular King, etc.* London, 1885).

Caxton and First English Printing.

In the midst of those draggling, dreary, dismal war-times, when no poet lifted his voice in song, when no chronicler who has a worthy name wrote any story of the years, there came into vogue in Europe and in England, a trade — which in its issues had more to do with the life and spread of good literature, than any poet, or any ten poets could accomplish. You will guess at once what the trade was; it was the trade of Printing.

Bosworth field dates in 1485: in the middle of the century (or 1444) John Gutenberg began the printing of a Bible; and a little after, Faust began to dispose of wonderful copies of books, which the royal buyers thought to be manuscripts: and Faust did not perhaps undeceive them: yet copies were so wonderfully alike — one to the other — that book lovers were puzzled, and pushed inquiry, and so the truth of the method came out.

In 1477 William Caxton set up the first English printing press — in an old building, close upon Westminster Abbey — a building, which, if tradition is to be trusted, was standing down to near the middle

of the present century; and on its demolition in 1846 its timbers were converted into snuff-boxes and the like, as mementos of the first printer. It was in 1477 that William Caxton issued the first book, printed with a date, in England.*

This Caxton was a man worth knowing about on many counts: he was a typical Englishman, born in Kent; was apprenticed to a well-to-do mercer in the Old Jewry, London, at a time when, he says, many poor were a-hungered for bread made of fern roots;—he went over (while yet apprentice) to the low countries of Flanders, perhaps to represent his master's interests; abode there; throve there; came to be Governor of the Company of English merchant adventurers, in the ancient town of Bruges: knew the great, rich Flemings † who were

* Caxton had been concerned, in company with Colard Mansion, in printing other books, on the Continent, at an earlier date than this. The first book "set up" in England, was probably Caxton's translation—entitled "*The Recuyle of the Histories of Troye.*" Vid. Blade's *William Caxton:* London, 1882.

† Noticeable among these Louis de Bruges, Seigneur de la Gruthuyse—afterward made (by Edward IV. of England) Earl of Winchester.

patrons of letters;—became friend and protégé of that English Princess Margaret who married Charles Duke of Burgundy; did work in translating old books for that great lady; studied the new printing art, which had crept into Bruges, and finally, after thirty odd years of life in the busy Flemish city sailed away for London, and set up a press which he had brought with him, under the shadow of Westminster towers. Fifteen years and more he wrought on there, at his printer's craft—counting up a hundred issues of books; making much of his own copy, both translation and original, and dying over seventy in 1492. A good tag to tie to this date is—the Discovery of America; Columbus being over seas on that early voyage of his, while the first English printer lay dying.

And what were the books, pray, which Master Caxton—who, for a wonder, was shrewd business man, as well as inclined to literary ways—thought it worth his while to set before the world? Among them we find *A Sequell of the Historie of Troie—The Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers*—a history of Jason, the *Game and Plays of Chesse*, Mallory's King Arthur (to which I have previously alluded),

a *Book of Courtesie*, translations from Ovid, Virgil and Cicero — also the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer (of whom he was great admirer) — coupling with these latter, poems by Lydgate and Gower; many people in those days seeming to rank these men on a level with Chaucer — just as we yoke writers together now in newspaper mention, who will most certainly be unyoked in the days that are to come.

The editions of the first English books ranged at about two hundred copies: the type was what we call black letter, of which four varieties were used on the Caxton press, and the punctuation — if any — was of the crudest. An occasional sample of his work appears from time to time on the market even now; but not at prices which are inviting to the most of us. Thus in 1862, there was sold in England, a little Latin tractate printed by Caxton — of only ten leaves quarto, with twenty-four lines to the page, for £200; and I observe upon the catalogue of a recent date of Mr. Quaritch (the London bibliopole) a copy of *Godefroi de Bouloyne*, of the Caxton imprint, offered at the modest price of £1,000.

Very shortly after the planting of this first press at Westminster, others were established at Oxford

and also at the great monastery of St. Albans. Among the early books printed at this latter place — say within ten years after Caxton's first — was a booklet written by a certain Dame Juliana Barnes;* it is the first work we have encountered written by a woman; and what do you think may have been its subject? Religion — poesy — love — embroidery? Not one of these; but some twenty odd pages of crude verse "upon the maner of huntyng for all maner of bestys" (men — not being included); and she writes with the gusto and particularity of a man proud of his falcons and his dogs. Warton says blandly: "The barbarism of the times strongly appears in the indelicate expressions which she often uses; and which are equally incompatible with her sex and profession." The allusion to her "profession" has reference to her supposed position as prioress of a convent; this, however, is matter of grave doubt.

* More frequently called *Juliana Berners* — supposed relative of the Lords Berners and Abbess of Sopwell. Rev. Mr. Skeat, however — a very competent witness — confirms the reading given. For discussion of the question see the *Angler's Note Book*, No. iv. (1884) and opinions of Messrs. Quaritch & Westwood.

Old Private Letters.

But this is not the only utterance of a female voice which we hear from out those years of barrenness and moil. In 1787 there appeared in England a book made up of what were called Paston Letters* — published and vouched for by an antiquarian of Norfolk, who had the originals in his possession — and which were in fact familiar letters that had passed between the members and friends of a well-to-do Norfolk family in the very years of the War of the Roses, of Caxton, of King Richard, and of Wynkyn de Worde.

Among the parties to these old letters, there is a John Paston senior and a Sir John Paston, and a John Paston the younger and a good Margery Paston; there is a Sir John Fastolf too — as luck would have it. Was this the prototype† of Shakespeare's

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*The authenticity of these letters, published by John Fenn, Esq., F.A.S., has been questioned by Herman Merivale and others; James Gairdner, however (of the Record office), has argued in their favor, and would seem to have put the question at rest.

†Fuller, in his *Worthies of England*, says "The comedian is not excusable by some alteration of his name, seeing the

man of humors? Probably not: nor can we say of a certainty that he was the runaway warrior who was of so bad repute for a time in the army of the Duke of Bedford: but we do know from these musty papers that he had a "Jacket of red velvet, bound round the bottom with red leather," and "Another jacket of russet velvet lyned with blanket clothe;" also "Two jackets of deer's leather, with a collar of black velvet," and so on.

We do not however care so much about this Fastolf inventory, as for what good Margaret Paston may have to say: and as we read her letters we seem to go back on her quaint language and her good wifely fondness to the very days when they were written — in the great country-house of Norfolk, near upon the city of Norwich, with the gentle east wind from the German Ocean, blowing over the Norfolk fens, and over the forests, and over the orchards, and over the barns, and into the hall-windows, and lifting the very sheets of paper on which the good dame Margery is writing. And what does she say?

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vicinity of sounds intrench on the memory of a worthy Knight; and few do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling their names."

"Ryte worshipful husband, I recommend me unto you" — she begins; and thereafter goes on to speak of a son who has been doing unwise things, and been punished therefor as would seem:—

"As for his demeaning, syn you departed, in good faith, it hath been ryt good, I hope he will be well demeaned to please you hereafterward; and I beseche you hartily that you would vouchsafe to be hys good fader, for I hope he is chastyzèd, and will be worthier. As for all oder tyngges at home, I hope that I, and oder shall do our part therein, as wel as we may: but as for mony it cometh in slowly, and God hav you in his keeping, and sen you good speed in all yr matters."

Again, in another note, she addresses her husband,—

"Myn oune sweethert [a good many years after marriage too!] in my most humble wyse I recommend me to you; desiring hertly to her of your welfare, the which I beseche Almighty God preserve and kepe."

And a son writes to this same worthy Margaret:—

"Ryght worshipful and my moste kynde and tender moder, I recommend me to you, thanking you of the great coste, and of the grete chere that ye dyd me, and myn, at my last being with you. *Item:* As for the books that weer Sir James [would] it like you that I may have them? I am not able to buy them; but somewhat wolde I give, and the

remnant with a good devout hert, by my truthe, I will pray for his soule.

"Also, moder, I herd while in London ther was a goodly young woman to marry whyche was daughter to one Seff, a mercer, and she will have 200 pounds in money to her marriage, and 20 £ by year after the dysesse of a step-moder of hers, whiche is upon 50 yeeres of age: and fore I departed out o' Lunnon, I spak with some of the mayd's friends, and hav gotten their good wille to hav her married to my broder Edmond. Master Pykenham too is another that must be consulted — so he says: Wherefore, Moder, we must beseeche you to helpe us forward with a lettyr to Master Pykenham, for to remember him for to handyl this matter, now, this Lent."

A younger son writes:—

"I beseeche you humbly of your blessing: also, modyr, I beseeche you that ther may be purveyed some meane that I myth have sent me home by the same messenger that shall bring my Aunt Poynings answer — two paire hose — I payr blak and another russet, whyche be redy for me at the hosers with the crooked back next to the Blk Friars gate, within Ludgate. John Pampyng knoweth him well eno'. And if the blk hose be paid for, he will send me the russet ones unpaid for. I beseeche you that this geer be not forgot, for I have not an whole hose to do on. I pray you visit the Rood of St. Pauls, and St. Savior at Barmonsey whyls ye abide in London, and let my sister Margery go with you to pray to them that she may have a good husband ere she come home again. Written at Norwich on holyrood day, by yr

"Son and lowly Servant

"JNO: PASTON THE YOUNGEST."

This sounds as home-like as if it were written yesterday, and about one of us — even to the sending of two pair of hose if one was paid for. And yet this familiar, boy-like letter was written in the year 1465: six years before Caxton had set up his press in Westminster — twenty-seven before Columbus had landed on San Salvador, and at a time when Louis XI. and barber Oliver (whose characters are set forth in Scott's story of Quentin Durward) were hanging men who angered them on the branches of the trees which grew around the dismal palace of Plessis-les-Tours, in France.

A Burst of Balladry.

I have brought my readers through a waste literary country to-day; but we cannot reach the oases of bloom without going across the desert spaces. In looking back upon this moil and turmoil — this fret and wear and barrenness of the fifteenth century, in which we have welcomed talk about Caxton's sorry translations, and the wheezing of his press; and have given an ear to the hunting discourse of Dame Juliana, for want of better things; and have dwelt with a certain gleesomeness on the

homely Paston Letters, let us not forget that there has been all the while, and running through all the years of stagnation, a bright thread of balladry, with glitter and with gayety of color. This ballad music — whose first burst we can no more pin to a date than we can the first singing of the birds — had lightened, in that early century, the walk of the wayfarer on all the paths of England; it had spun its tales by bivouac fires in France; it had caught — as in silken meshes — all the young foragers on the ways of Romance. To this epoch, of which we have talked, belongs most likely that brave ballad of Chevy Chase, which keeps alive the memory of Otterbourne, and of that woful hunting which

> "Once there did, in Chevy Chase befal."

> "To drive the deare with hounde and horne
> Erle Percy took his way;
> The child may rue, that is unborn
> The hunting of that day."

Hereabout, too, belongs in all probability the early English shaping of the jingling history of the brave deeds of Sir Guy of Warwick; and some of the tales of Robin Hood and his "pretty men all," which had been sung in wild and crude carols for

a century or more, now seem to have taken on a more regular ballad garniture, and certainly became fixtures in type. This is specially averred of "Robin Hood and the Monk," beginning: —

"In summer when the shawes be sheyne
And levès be large and long,
Hit is full merry, in feyre forést,
To here the foulé's song;
To see the dere draw to the dale,
And leve the hillés hee,
And shadow them in the levés green,
Under the grenwode tree."

But was Robin Hood a myth? Was he a real yeoman — was he the Earl of Huntington? We cannot tell; we know no one who can. We know only that this hero of the folk-songs made the common people's ideal of a good fellow — brave, lusty — a capital bowman, a wondrous wrestler, a lover of good cheer, a hater of pompous churchmen, a spoiler of the rich, a helper of the poor, with such advices as these for Little John: —

"Loke ye do no housbande harme
That tylleth with his plough;
No more ye shall no good yeman
That walketh by grenewode shawe,

Ne no knyght, ne no squyèr,
That wolde be a good felawe."

That very charming ballad of the Nut-Brown Maid must also have been well known to contemporaries of Caxton: She is daughter of a Baron, and her love has been won by a wayfarer, who says he is "an outlaw," and a banished man, a squire of low degree. He tries her faith and constancy, as poor Griselda's was tried in Chaucèr's story—in Boccaccio's tale, and as men have tried and teased women from the beginning of time. He sets before her all the dangers and the taunts that will come to her; she must forswear her friends; she must go to the forest with him; she must not be jealous of any other maiden lying *perdue* there; she must dare all, and brave all,—

"Or else—I to the greenwood go
Alone, a banished man."

At last, having tormented her sufficiently, he confesses — that he is not an outlaw — not a banished man, but one who will give her wealth, and rank, and name and fame. And I will close out our present talk with a verselet or two from this rich old ballad.

The wooer says—

"I counsel you, remember howe
It is no maydens law
Nothing to doubt, but to ren out
To wed with an outlaw:
For ye must there, in your hand bere
A bowe ready to draw,
And as a thefe, thus must you live
Ever in drede and awe
Whereby to you grete harme might growe;
Yet had I lever than
That I had to the grenewode go
Alone, a banished man."

She: "I think not nay, but as ye say
It is no maiden's lore
But love may make me, for your sake
As I have say'd before,
To come on fote, to hunt and shote
To get us mete in store;
For so that I, your company
May have, I ask no more,
From which to part, it maketh my hart
As cold as any stone;
For in my minde, of all mankinde
I love but you alone."

He: "A baron's child, to be beguiled
It were a cursèd dede!
To be felawe with an outlawe
Almighty God forbid!

Yt better were, the poor Squyère
Alone to forest yede,
Than ye shold say, another day
That by my cursed dede
Ye were betrayed; wherefore good maid
The best rede that I can
Is that I to the grenewode go
Alone, a banished man."

She: "Whatever befal, I never shall
Of this thing you upraid;
But if ye go, and leve me so
Then have ye me betrayed;
Remember you wele, how that ye dele
For if ye, as ye said
Be so unkynde to leave behinde
Your love the Nut Brown Mayd
Trust me truly, that I shall die
Soon after ye be gone;
For in my minde, of all mankinde
I love but you alone."

He: "My own deare love, I see thee prove
That ye be kynde and true:
Of mayd and wife, in all my life
The best that ever I knewe
Be merry and glad; be no more sad
The case is chaunged newe
For it were ruthe, that for your truthe
Ye should have cause to rue;
Be not dismayed, whatever I said

To you when I began ;
I will not to the grenewode go
I am no banished man."

And she, with delight and fear —

"These tidings be more glad to me
Than to be made a quene ;
If I were sure they shold endure
But it is often seene
When men wyl break promise, they speak
The wordes on the splene :
Ye shape some wyle, me to beguile
And stele from me I wene ;
Then were the case, worse than it was
And I more woebegone,
For in my minde, of all mankynde
I love but you alone."

Then he — at last, —

"Ye shall not nede, further to drede
I will not disparàge
You (God defend !) syth ye descend
Of so grate a linèage ;
Now understand—to Westmorèland
Which is mine heritàge
I wyl you bring, and with a ryng
By way of marriàge
I wyl you take, and lady make
As shortely as I can :
Thus have you won an Erly's son
And not a banished man."

In our next chapter we shall enter upon a different century, and encounter a different people. We shall find a statelier king, whose name is more familiar to you: In place of the fat knight and Prince Hal, we shall meet brilliant churchmen and hard-headed reformers; and in place of Otterbourne and its balladry, we shall see the smoke of Smithfield fires, and listen to the psalmody of Sternhold.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN we turned the leaf upon the Balladry of England, we were upon fifteenth century ground, which, you will remember, we found very barren of great writers. Gower and Froissart, whom we touched upon, slipped off the stage just as the century began — their names making two of those joined in that group of deaths to which I called attention, and which marked the meeting of two centuries. Next we had glimpse of Lydgate and of King James (of Scotland), who, at their best, only gave faint token of the poetic spirit which illuminated the far better verses of Chaucer.

We then passed over the period of the Henrys, and of the War of the Roses, with mention of Shakespeare's Falstaff — of his Prince Hal — his Agincourt — his courtship of Katharine of Valois — his inadequate presentment of the Maid of Orleans

—his crabbed and crooked Richard III. — all rounded out with the battle of Bosworth field, and the coming to power of Henry of Richmond.

We found the book-trade taking on a new phase with Caxton's press: we gave a tinkling bit of Skelton's "Merry Margaret;" we put a woman-writer —Dame Juliana Barnes — for the first time on our list; we lingered over the quaint time-stained Paston Letters, which smelled so strongly of old English home-life; and we summed up our talk with a little bugle-note of that Balladry which made fitful snatches of music all through the weariness of those hundred years.

Early Days of Henry VIII.

To-day we front the sixteenth century. Great names and great deeds crop out over it as thickly as leaves grow in summer. At the very outset, three powerful monarchs came almost abreast upon the scene — Henry VIII. of England, Francis I. of France, and Charles V. of Spain, Germany, and the Low Countries.

Before the first quarter of the century had passed, the monk Luther had pasted his ticket upon the

doors of the church at Wittemberg; and that other soldier-monk, Loyola, was astir with the beginnings of Jesuitism. America had been planted; the Cape of Good Hope was no longer the outpost of stormy wastes of water with no shores beyond. St. Peter's church was a-building across the Tiber, and that brilliant, courteous, vicious, learned Leo X. was lording it in Rome. The Moors and their Saracen faith had been driven out of the pleasant countries that are watered by the Guadalquivir. Titian was alive and working; and so was Michael Angelo and Raphael, in the great art-centres of Italy: and Venice was in this time so rich, so grand, so beautiful, so abounding in princely houses, in pictures, in books, in learning, and in all social splendors, that to pass two winters in the City of the Lagoon, was equal to the half of a polite education; and I suppose that a Florentine or Venetian or Roman of that day, thought of a pilgrimage to the far-away, murky London, as Parisians think now of going to Chicago, or Omaha, or San Francisco — excellent places, with delightful people in them; but not the centres about which the literary and art world goes spinning, as a wheel goes spinning on its hub.

We have in the contemporary notes of a well-known Venetian chronicler, Marini Sanuto — who was secretary to the famous Council of Ten — evidence of the impression which was made on that far-off centre of business and of learning, by such an event as the accession of Henry VIII. to the throne of England. This Sanuto was a man of great dignity; and by virtue of his position in the Council, heard all the "relations" of the ambassadors of Venice; and hence his Diary is a great mine of material for contemporary history.

"News have come," he says, "through Rome of the death of the King of England on April 20th [1509]. 'Twas known in Lucca on the 6th May, by letters from the bankers Bonvisi. The new King is nineteen years old, a worthy King, and hostile to France. He is the son-in-law of the King of Spain. His father was called Henry, and fifty odd years of age; he was a very great *miser*, but a man of vast ability, and had accumulated so much gold that he is supposed to have [had] more than wellnigh all the other Kings of Christendom. The King, his son, is liberal and handsome —the friend of Venice, and the enemy of France. This intelligence is *most* satisfactory."

Certainly the new king was most liberal in his spending, and as certainly was abundantly provided for. And money counted in those days — as it does

most whiles: no man in England could come to the dignity of Justice of the Peace — such office as our evergreen friend Justice Shallow holds in Shakespeare — except he had a rental of £20 per annum, equivalent to a thousand dollars of present money — measured by its purchasing power of wheat.* By the same standard the average Earl had a revenue of £20,000, and the richest of the peers is put down at a probable income of three times this amount.

What a special favorite of the crown could do in the way of expenditure is still made clear to us by those famous walks, gardens, and gorgeous saloons of Hampton Court, where the great Cardinal Wolsey set his armorial bearings upon the wall — still to be seen over the entrance of the Clock Court. If you go there — and every American visitor in London should be sure to find a way thither — you will see, may be, in the lower range of windows, that look upon the garden court — the pots of geranium and the tabby cats belonging to gentlewomen of rank, but of decayed fortune — humble pensioners of Vic-

* The equipment of a parsonage house in Kent in those days, is set forth in full inventory (from MS. in the Rolls House) by Mr. Froude.—*History of England*, chap. i., p. 47.

toria — who occupy the sunny rooms from which, in the times we are talking of, the pampered servants of the great Cardinal looked out. And when the great man drove to court, or into the city, his retinue of outriders and lackeys, and his golden trappings, made a spectacle for all the street mongers.

Into that panorama, too, of the early days of Henry VIII., enters with slow step, and with sad speech, poor Katharine of Aragon — the first in order of this stalwart king's wives. Mrs. Fanny Kemble Butler used to read that queen's speech with a pathos that brought all the sadnesses of that sad court to life again: Miss Cushman, too, you may possibly have heard giving utterance to the same moving story; but, I think, with a masculinity about her manner she could never wholly shake off, and which gave the impression that she could — if need were — give the stout king such a buffet on the ears as would put an end to all chaffer about divorce.

Shakespeare, writing that play of Henry VIII., probably during the lifetime of Elizabeth (though its precise date and full authenticity are matters of doubt), could not speak with very much freedom of the great queen's father: She had too much of that

father's spirit in her to permit that; otherwise, I think the great dramatist would have given a blazing score to the cruelty and *Bluebeardism* of Henry VIII.

I know that there be those acute historic inquirers who would persuade us to believe that the king's much-marrying propensities were all in order, and legitimate, and agreeable to English constitutional sanction: but I know, too, that there is a strong British current of common-sense setting down all through the centuries which finds harbor in the old-fashioned belief — that the king who, with six successive wives of his own choice, divorced two, and cut off the heads of other two, must have had — vicious weaknesses. For my own part, I take a high moral delight — Froude to the contrary — in thinking of him as a clever, dishonest, good-natured, obstinate, selfish, ambitious, tempestuous, arrogant scoundrel. Yet, withal, he was a great favorite in his young days; — so tall, so trim, so stout, so rich, so free with his money. No wonder the stately and disconsolate Queen (of Aragon) said: —

"Would I had never trod this English earth,
Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it;
Ye've angels faces, but Heaven knows your hearts!"

And this wilful King befriended learning and letters in his own wilful way. Nay, he came to have ambitions of his own in that direction, when he grew too heavy for practice with the long-bow, or for feats of riding—in which matters he had gained eminence even amongst those trained to sports and exercises of the field.

Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas More.

It was with the King's capricious furtherance that Cardinal Wolsey became so august a friend of learning. The annalists delight in telling us how the great Cardinal went down to St. Paul's School to attend upon an exhibition of the boys there, who set afoot a tragedy founded upon the story of Dido. And at the boys' school was then established as head-master that famous William Lilly * who had learned Greek in his voyaging into Eastern seas, and was among the first to teach it in England: he was the author too of that *Lilly's Latin Grammar*

* Not to be confounded with William Lilly the astrologer of the succeeding century. William Lilly of St. Paul's was b. 1468; d. (of the plague) in 1532. His Latin Grammar was first published in 1513.

which was in use for centuries, and of which later editions are hanging about now in old New England garrets, from whose mouldy pages our grandfathers learned to decline their *pennæ—pennarum.* Wolsey wrote a preface for one of the earlier issues of this Lilly's Grammar; and the King gave it a capital advertisement by proclaiming it illegal to use any other. The Cardinal, moreover, in later years established a famous school at his native place of Ipswich (a rival in its day to that of Eton), and he issued an address to all the schoolmasters of England in favor of accomplishing the boys submitted to their charge in the most elegant literatures.

The great Hall of Christ's Church College, Oxford, still further serves to keep in mind the memory and the munificence of Cardinal Wolsey: it must be remembered, however, in estimating his munificence that he had only to confiscate the revenues of a small monastery to make himself full-pocketed for the endowment of a college. 'Tis certain that he loved learning, and that he did much for its development in the season of his greatest power and influence; certain, too, that his

ambitions were too large for the wary King, his master, and brought him to that dismal fall from his high estate, which is pathetically set forth in Shakespeare's Henry VIII. :

"——— Farewell to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost—a killing frost;
And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening—nips his root
And then he falls as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory;
But far beyond my depth; my high-blown pride
At length broke under me; and now has left me,
Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must forever hide me."

Another favorite of Henry in the early days of his kingship, and one bearing a far more important name in the literary annals of England than that of Wolsey, was Sir Thomas More. He was a Greek of the very Greeks, in both character and attainment. Born in the heart of London — in Milk Street, now just outside of the din and roar of Cheapside, he was a scholar of Oxford, and was

the son of a knight, who, like Sir Thomas himself, had a reputation for shrewd sayings — of which the old chronicler, William Camden,* has reported this sample: —

"Marriage," said the elder More, "with its chances, is like dipping one's hand into a bag, with a great many snakes therein, and but one eel; the which most serviceable and comfortable eel might possibly be seized upon; but the chances are largely in favor of catching a stinging snake:"

But, says the chronicler — this good knight did himself thrust *his* hand three several times into such a bag, and with such ensuing results as preserved him hale and sound to the age of ninety or thereabout. The son inherited this tendency to whimsical speech, joining with it rare merits as a scholar: and it used to be said of him as a boy, that he could thrust himself into the acting of a Latin comedy and extemporize his part, with such wit and apt-

* William Camden, antiquary and chronicler; b. 1551; d. 1623. *Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha,* pub. 1615. In 1597 he published a Greek Grammar — for the Westminster boys; he being at the time head-master of the school.

ness, as not to break upon the drift of the play. He studied, as I said, at Oxford; and afterward Law at Lincoln's Inn; was onewhile strongly inclined to the Church, and under influence of a patron who was a Church dignitary became zealous Religionist, and took to wearing in penance a bristling hair-shirt — which (or one like it) he kept wearing till prison-days and the scaffold overtook him, as they overtook so many of the quondam friends of Henry VIII. For he had been early presented to that monarch — even before Henry had come to the throne — and had charmed him by his humor and his scholarly talk: so that when More came to live upon his little farm at Chelsea (very near to Cheyne Row where Carlyle died but a few years since) the King found his way thither on more than one occasion; and there are stories of his pacing up and down the garden walks in familiar talk with the master.

There, too, came for longer stay, and for longer and friendlier communings, the great and scholarly Erasmus (afterward teacher of Greek at Cambridge) — and out of one of these visitations to Chelsea grew the conception and the working out

of his famous Praise of Folly, with its punning title — *Encomium Moriæ.**

The King promised preferment to More — which came in its time. I think he was in Flanders on the King's business, when upon a certain day, as he was coming out from the Antwerp Cathedral, he encountered a stranger, with long beard and sunburnt face — a man of the "Ancient Mariner" stamp, who had made long voyages with that Amerigo Vespucci who stole the honor of naming America: and this long-bearded mariner told Sir Thomas More of the strange things he had seen in a country farther off than America, called *Utopia.* Of course, it is something doubtful if More ever really encountered such a mariner, or if he did not contrive him only as a good frontispiece for his political fiction. This is the work by which More is best known (through its English translations); and it has given the word Utopian to our every-day speech. The present popular significance of this term will give you a proper hint of the character of the book: it is an

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* *Erasmus:* by Robert Blackley Drummond (chap. vii.). London, 1873.

elaborate and whimsical and yet statesmanlike forecast of a government too good and honest and wise to be sound and true and real.

Sir Thomas smacked the humor of the thing, in giving the name *Utopia*, which is Greek for *Nowhere*. If, indeed, men were all honest, and women all virtuous and children all rosy and helpful, we might all live in a Utopia of our own. All the Fourierites — the Socialists — the Knights of Labor might find the germs of their best arguments in this reservoir of the ideal maxims of statecraft. In this model country, gold was held in large disrespect; and to keep the scorn of it wholesome, it was put to the vilest uses: a great criminal was compelled to wear gold rings in his ears: chains were made of it for those in bondage; and a particularly obnoxious character put to the wearing of a gold head-band; so too diamonds and pearls were given over to the decoration of infants; and these, with other baby accoutrements, they flung aside in disgust, so soon as they came to sturdy childhood. When therefore upon a time, Ambassadors came to Utopia, from a strange country, with their tricksy show of gold and jewels — the old Voyager says: —

"You sh[d] have sene [Utopian] children that had caste away their peerles and pretious stones, when they sawe the like sticking upon the Ambassadours cappes; — digge and pushe theire mothers under the sides, sainge thus to them, — 'Loke mother how great a lubbor doth yet were peerles, as though he were a litel child stil!' 'Peace sone,' saith she; 'I thinke he be some of the Ambassadours fooles.'"

Also in this model state industrial education was in vogue; children all, of whatsovever parentage, were to be taught some craft — as "masonrie or smith's craft, or the carpenter's science." Unlawful games were decried — such as "dyce, cardes, tennis, coytes [quoits] — do not all these," says the author, "sende the haunters of them streyghte a stealynge, when theyr money is gone?"

The Russian Count Tolstoi's opinion that money is an invention of Satan and should be abolished, is set forth with more humor and at least equal logic, in this Latin tractate of More's.

In the matters of Religion King Utopus decreed that

"it should be lawful for everie man to favoure and folow what religion he would, and that he mighte do the best he could to bring other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceablie, gentelie, quietlie and sobelie, without hastie and contentious rebuking."

Yet this same self-contained Sir Thomas More did in his after controversies with Tyndale use such talk of him — about his "whyning and biting and licking and tumbling in the myre," and "rubbing himself in puddles of dirt,"— as were like anything but the courtesies of Utopia. Indeed it is to be feared that theologic discussion does not greatly provoke gentleness of speech, in any time; it is a very grindstone to put men's wits to sharpened edges. But More was a most honest man withal; — fearless in advocacy of his own opinions; eloquent, self-sacrificing — a tender father and husband — master of a rich English speech (his *Utopia* was written in Latin, but translated many times into English, and most languages of Continental Europe), learned in the classics — a man to be remembered as one of the greatest of Henry VIII.'s time; a Romanist, at a date when honestest men doubted if it were worthiest to be a King's man or a Pope's man; — not yielding to his royal master in points of religious scruple, and with a lofty obstinacy in what he counted well doing, going to the scaffold, with as serene a step as he had ever put to his walks in the pleasant gardens of Chelsea.

Cranmer, Latimer, Knox, and Others.

A much nobler figure is this, to my mind, than that of Cranmer,* who appears in such picturesque lights in the drama of Henry VIII. — who gave adhesion to royal wishes for divorce upon divorce; who always colored his religious allegiances with the colors of the King; who was a scholar indeed — learned, eloquent; who wrought well, as it proved, for the reformed faith; but who wilted under the fierce heats of trial; would have sought the good will of the blood-thirsty Mary; but who gave even to his subserviencies a half-tone that brought distrust, and so — finally — the fate of that quasi-martyrdom which has redeemed his memory.

He stands very grandly in his robes upon the memorial cross at Oxford: and he has an even more august presence in the final scene of Shakespeare's play, where amidst all churchly and courtly pomp, he christened the infant — who was to become the

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* Cranmer, b. 1489; d. 1556.

Complete edition of his works published 1834 (Rev. H. Jenkyns). Cranmer's *Bible* so called, because accompanied by a prologue, written by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop, etc.

Royal Elizabeth, and says to the assembled dignitaries:

"This royal infant
Tho' in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
Which time will bring to ripeness: She shall be
A pattern to all princes living with her,
And all that shall succeed her. Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her:
She shall be loved and feared.
A most unspotted lily shall she pass
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her." *

Tennyson, in his drama of Queen Mary (a most unfortunate choice of heroine) gives a statuesque pose to this same Archbishop Cranmer; but Shakespeare's figures are hard to duplicate. He was with Henry VIII. as counsellor at his death; was intimate adviser of the succeeding Edward VI.: and took upon himself obligations from that King

* There are many reasons for doubting if these lines were from Shakespeare's own hand. Emerson (*Representative Men*) — rarely given to Literary criticism, remarks upon "the bad rhythm of the compliment to Queen Elizabeth" as unworthy the great Dramatist: so too, he doubts, though with less reason — the Shakespearean origin of the Wolsey Soliloquy. See also Trans. New Shakespere Society for 1874. Part I. (Spedding *et al.*)

(contrary to his promises to Henry) which brought him to grief under Queen Mary. That brave thrust of his offending hand into the blaze that consumed him, cannot make us forget his weaknesses and his recantations; nor will we any more forget that he it was, who gave (1543) to the old Latin Liturgy of the Church that noble, English rhythmic flow which so largely belongs to it to-day.

It is quite impossible to consider the literary aspects of the period of English history covered by the reign of Henry VIII., and the short reigns of the two succeeding monarchs, Edward VI. and Mary, without giving large frontage to the Reformers and religious controversialists. Every scholar was alive to the great battle in the Church. The Greek and Classicism of the Universities came to have their largest practical significance in connection with the settlement of religious questions or in furnishing weapons for the ecclesiastic controversies of the day. The voices of the poets — the Skeltons, the Sackvilles, the Wyatts, were chirping sparrows' voices beside that din with which Luther thundered in Germany, and Henry VIII. thundered back, more weakly, from his stand-point of Anglicanism.

We have seen Wolsey in his garniture of gold, going from court to school; and Sir Thomas More, stern, strong, and unyielding; and Archbishop Cranmer, disposed to think rightly, but without the courage to back up his thought; and associated with these, it were well to keep in mind the other figures of the great religious processional. There was William Tyndale, native of Gloucestershire, a slight, thin figure of a man; honest to the core; well-taught; getting dignities he never sought; wearied in his heart of hearts by the flattering coquetries of the King; perfecting the work of Wyclif in making the old home Bible readable by all the world. His translation was first printed in Wittenberg about 1530:* I give the Lord's Prayer as it appeared in the original edition:—

"Oure Father which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth, as hit ys in heven. Geve vs this daye oure dayly breade. And forgeve vs oure trespases, even as we forgeve them which treespas vs. Leade vs not into temptacion but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen."

* William Tyndale, b. about 1480; d. (burned at the stake) 1536. G. P. Marsh (*Eng. Language and Early Lit.*) says "Tyndale's translation of the New Testament has exerted a

But Tyndale was not safe in England; nor yet in the Low Countries whither he went, and where the long reach of religious hate and jealousy put its hand upon him and brought him to a death whose fiery ignominies are put out of sight by the lustrous quality of his deservings.

I see too amongst those great, dim figures, that speak in Scriptural tones, the form of Hugh Latimer, as he stands to-day on the Memorial Cross in Oxford. I think of him too — in humbler dress than that which the sculptor has put on him — even the yeoman's clothes, which he wore upon his father's farm, in the Valley of the Soar, when he wrought there in the meadows, and drank in humility of thought, and manly independence under the skies of Leicestershire * — where (as he says), "My father had walk for an hundred sheep, and my mother

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more marked influence upon English philology than any other native work between the ages of Chaucer and of Shakespeare."

* Latimer (Hugh) b. 1491; d. (at the stake) 1555. He was educated at Cambridge — came to be Bishop of Worcester — wrote much, wittily and strongly. A collection of his Sermons was published in 1570–71; and there have been many later issues.

milked thirty kine." He kept his head upon his shoulders through Henry's time — his amazing wit and humor helping him to security; — was in fair favor with Edward; but under Mary, walked coolly with Ridley to the stake, where the fires were set, to burn them both in Oxford.

Foxe* too is to be remembered for his Stories of the Martyrs of these, and other times, which have formed the nightmare reading for so many school-boys.

I see, too, another figure that will not down in this coterie of Reformers, and that makes itself heard from beyond the Tweed. This is John Knox,† a near contemporary though something younger than most I have named, and not ripening to his

* John Foxe, b. 1517; d. 1587. He was a native of Boston, Lincolnshire; was educated at Oxford; his *History of the Acts and Monuments of the Church* was first published in England in 1563. There was an earlier edition published at Strasbourg in 1554.

† Born near Haddington, Scotland, in 1505 (d. 1572); bred a friar; was prisoner in France in 1547; resided long time at Geneva; returned to Scotland in 1559. Life by Laing (1847) and by Brandes (1863); Swinburne's *Bothwell*, Act iv., gives dramatic rendering of a sermon by John Knox. See also Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship*, Lecture IV.

greatest power till Henry VIII. had gone. Born of humble parentage in Scotland in the early quarter of the century, he was a rigid Papist in his young days, but a more rigid Reformer afterward; much time a prisoner; passing years at Geneva; not altogether a "gloomy, shrinking, fanatic," but keeping, says Carlyle, "a pipe of Bordeaux in that old Edinboro house of his;" getting to know Cranmer, and the rest in England; discussing with these, changes of Church Service; counselling austerities, where Cranmer admitted laxities; afraid of no man, neither woman;—publishing in exile in Mary's day—*The first Blaste of the Trumpet against the monstrous Regiment of Women*, and repenting this—quietly no doubt—when Elizabeth came to power. A thin, frail man; strong no ways, but in courage, and in brain; with broad brows—black cap—locks floating gray from under it, in careless whirls that shook as he talked; an eye like a falcon's that flashed the light of twenty years, when sixty were on his shoulders; in after years, writhing with rheumatic pains—crawling upon his stick and a servant's arm into his Church of St. Andrews; lifted into his pulpit by the clerk and his attendant—leaning there on the

desk, a wilted heap of humanity — panting, shaking, quivering — till his breath came, and the psalm and the lifted prayer gave courage; then — fierce torrents of speech (and a pounding of the pulpit till it seemed that it would fly in shivers), with a sharp, swift, piercing utterance that pricked ears as it pricked consciences, and made the roof-timbers clang with echoes.

Of all these men there are no books that take high rank in Literature proper — unless we except the *Utopia* of More, and the New Testament of Tyndale: but their lives and thought were welded by stout blows into the intellectual texture of the century and are not to be forgotten.

Verse-Writing and Psalmodies.

And now, was there really no dalliance with the Muses in times that brought to the front such fighting Gospellers as we have talked of?

Yes, even Thomas More did write poems — having humor in them and grammatic proprieties, and his Latin prosody is admired of Classicists: then there were the versifiers of the Psalms, Sternhold and Hopkins, and the Whittingham who succeeded

John Knox at Geneva — sharing that Scotchman's distaste for beautiful rubrics, and we suspect beautiful verses also — if we may judge by his version of the Creed. This is a sample: —

"The Father, God is; God, the Son;
God — Holy Ghost also;
Yet are not three gods in all
But one God and no mo."

From the Apostles' Creed again, we excerpt this: —

"From thence, shall he come for to judge
All men both dead and quick.
I, in the Holy Ghost believe
And Church thats Catholick."

Hopkins,* who was a schoolmaster of Suffolk, and the more immediate associate of Sternhold, thus expostulates with the Deity: —

"Why doost withdraw thy hand aback
And hide it in thy lappe?
Oh, plucke it out, and be not slacke
To give thy foes a rap!"

As something worthier from these old psalmists' versing, I give this of Sternhold's: —

* In the issue of *Sternhold and Hopkins' Psalmody* of 1549 (one year after Sternhold's death) there were 37 psalms by

"The earth did shake, for feare did quake,
The hills their bases shook
Removed they were, in place most fayre
At God's right fearful looks.
He rode on hye and did so flye
Upon the Cherubins,
He came in sight, and made his flight
Upon the wings of winds," etc.

It may well be that bluff King Harry relished more the homely Saxonism of such psalms than the *Stabat Maters* and *Te Deums* and *Jubilates*, which assuredly would have better pleased the Princess Katharine of Aragon. Yet even at a time when the writers of such psalmodies received small crumbs of favor from the Court, the English Bible was by no means a free-goer into all companies.

"A nobleman or gentleman may read it"—(I quote from a Statute of Henry VIII.'s time)—"in his house, or in his garden, or orchard, yet quietly and without disturbance of order. A merchant may read it to himself privately: But the common people, women, artificers, apprentices, journeymen and servingmen, are to be punished with one month's imprisonment, as often as they are detected in reading the Bible, either privately or openly." *

Sternhold, and 7 by Hopkins. In subsequent editions more of Hopkins' work was added.

* 34 and 35 Henry VIII.: A.D. 1542-43. The full text

Truly this English realm was a strange one in those times, and this a strange King — who has listened approvingly to Hugh Latimer's sermons — who harries Tyndale as he had harried Tyndale's enemy — More; who fights the Pope, fights Luther, holds the new Bible (even Cranmer's) in leash, who gives pension to Sternhold, works easy riddance of all the wives he wishes, pulls down Religious Houses for spoils, calls himself Defender of the Faith, and maybe goes to see (if then on show) *Gammer Gurton's Needle,** and is hilariously responsive to such songs as this: —

"I cannot eat but little meat
My Stomach is not good
But sure I think, that I can drink
With him that wears a hood;

(*Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. III., pp. 895–7) gives some alleviating provisions in respect to "Noble women and gentle women, who reade to themselves;" and the same Statute makes particular and warning mention of the "Craftye, false and untrue translation of Tyndale."

* A coarse comedy written (probably) by John Still, one time Bishop of Bath. Its title on the imprint of 1575 runs thus: — "*A ryght pithy, pleasant and merie Comedy, intytuled Gammer Gurton's Nedle; playyed on the Stage not longe ago in Christes Colledge, in Cambridge, made by Mr. S., Master of Art.*"

Tho' I go bare, take ye no care
I nothing am a colde,
I stuffe my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and olde."

Wyatt and Surrey.

The model poets, however, of this reign * — those who kept alive the best old classic traditions, and echoed with most grace and spirit the daintiness of Italian verse, were the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt. The latter was son of an old courtier of Henry VII., and inheritor of an estate and castle in Kent, which he made noteworthy by his decorative treatment, and which is even now counted worthy a visit by those journeying through the little town of Maidstone. He was, for those times, brilliantly educated; was in high favor with the King (save one enforced visit to the Tower); he translated Petrarch, and in his own way imitated the Italian poet's manner, and was, by common consent, the first to graft the "Sonnet" upon English forms of

* Sir Thomas Wyatt (or Wyat). b. 1503; d. 1542. The Earl of Surrey (Henry Howard, and cousin to Catharine Howard, one of the wives of Henry VIII.), b. about 1517, and beheaded 1547.

verse. I find nothing however in his verse one-half so graceful or gracious as this tribute to his worth in Tennyson's "Queen Mary:"—

> "Courtier of many courts, he loves the more
> His own gray towers, plain life, and lettered peace,
> To read and rhyme in solitary fields;
> The lark above, the nightingale below,
> And answer them in song."

Surrey was well born: was son to the Duke of Norfolk who figures in the Shakespearean play of Henry VIII., and grandson to the Surrey who worsted the Scotch on Flodden Field: he was companion of the King's son, was taught at the Universities, at home and abroad. There was no gallant more admired in the gayer circles of the court; he too loved Petrarch, and made canzonets like his; had a Geraldine (for a Laura), half real and half mythical. The further story once obtained that he went with a gay retinue to Florence, where the lists were opened — in the spirit of an older chivalry — to this Stranger Knight, who challenged the world to combat his claims in behalf of the mythical Geraldine. And — the story ran — there were hotheads who contended with him; and he unhorsed

his antagonists, and came back brimming with honors, to the court — before which Hugh Latimer had preached, and where Sternhold's psalms had been heard — to be imprisoned for eating flesh in Lent, in that Windsor Castle where he had often played with the King's son. The tale * is a romantic one; but — in all that relates to the Florentine tourney — probably untrue.

I give you a little taste of the graceful way in which this poet sings of his Geraldine: —

"I assure thee even by oath
And thereon take my hand and troth
That she is one of the worthiest
The truest and the faithfullest
The gentlest, and the meekest o' mind
That here on earth a man may find;
And if that love and truth were gone
In her it might be found alone:
For in her mind no thought there is
But how she may be true, iwis,

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* Understood to be based on the relations of a certain *Unfortunate Traveller* (Jack Wilton) by Nash, 1595. The story was credited by Drayton, Winstanley, the *Athenæ Oxonienses* of Wood (edition of 1721), by Walpole (*Noble Authors*), and by Warton: The relations spoken of, however, show anachronisms which forbid their acceptance.

And is thine own; and so she says
And cares for thee ten thousand ways;
Of thee she speaks, on thee she thinks
With thee she eats, with thee she drinks
With thee she talks, with thee she moans
With thee she sighs, with thee she groans
With thee she says—'Farewell mine own!'
When thou, God knows, full far art gone."

Surrey is to be held in honor as the first poet who wrote English blank verse; he having translated two books of the Æneid in that form. But this delicate singer, this gallant soldier cannot altogether please the capricious monarch; perhaps he is too fine a soldier; perhaps too free a liver; perhaps he is dangerously befriended by some ladies of the court: Quite certain it is that the King frowns on him; and the frowns bring what they have brought to so many others — first, imprisonment in the Tower, and then the headsman's axe. In this way the poet died at thirty, in 1547: his execution being one of the last ordered by Henry VIII., and the King so weak that he could only stamp, instead of signing the death warrant.

Honest men breathed freer, everywhere, when

the King died, in the same year with Surrey: and so, that great, tempestuous reign was ended.

A Boy-King, a Queen, and Schoolmaster.

Edward VI. succeeded his father at the age of ten years — a precocious, consumptive boy, who gave over his struggle with life when only sixteen; and yet has left his "Works," printed by the Roxburgh Club. There's a maturity about some of the political suggestions in his "Journal" — not unusual in a lively mind prematurely ripening under stress of disease; yet we can hardly count him a literary king.

The red reign of Mary, immediately following, lasted only five years, for which, I think, all Christian England thanked God: In those five years very many of the strong men of whom we have talked in this chapter came to a fiery end.

Only one name of literary significance do we pluck from the annals of her time; it is that of Roger Ascham,* the writer of her Latin letters, and

* B. 1515; d. 1568. His works (in English) were collected and edited by Bennett in 1761. Fuller (*of the Wor-*

for a considerable time her secretary. How, being a Protestant as he was, and an undissembling one, he kept his head upon his shoulders so near her throne, it is hard to conjecture. He must have studied the art of keeping silence as well as the arts of speech.

He was born in that rich, lovely region of Yorkshire — watered by the River Swale — where we found the young Wyclif: his father was a house-steward; but he early made show of such qualities as invited the assistance of rich friends, through whose offices he was entered at St. John's College, Cambridge, at fifteen, and took his degree at eighteen. He was full of American pluck, aptness, and industry; was known specially for his large gifts in language; a superb penman too, which was no little accomplishment in that day; withal, he excelled in athletics, and showed a skill with the long-bow which made credible the traditions about Robin Hood. They said he wasted time at this exercise; whereupon he wrote a defence of Archery,

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thies) writes of Ascham: "He was an honest man and a good shooter. His *Toxophilus* is a good book for young men; his *Scholemaster* for old; his *Epistles* for all men."

which under the name of *Toxophilus* has come down to our day — a model even now of good, homely, vigorous English. "He that will write well in any tongue," said he, "must follow this counsel — to speak as the common people do — to think as wise men do." Our teachers of rhetoric could hardly say a better thing to-day.

The subject of Archery was an important one at that period; the long-bow was still the principal war weapon of offence: there were match-locks, indeed, but these very cumbrous and counting for less than those "cloth-yard" shafts which had won the battle of Agincourt. The boy-King, Edward, to whom Ascham taught penmanship, was an adept at archery, and makes frequent allusion to that exercise in his Journal. In every hamlet practice at the long-bow was obligatory; and it was ordered by statute that no person above the age of twenty-four, should shoot the light-flight arrow at a distance under two hundred and twenty yards. What would our Archery Clubs say to this? And what, to the further order — dating in Henry VIII.'s time — that "all bow-staves should be three fingers thick and seven feet long?"

This book of Ascham's was published two years before Henry's death, and brought him a small pension; under the succeeding king he went to Augsburg, where Charles V. held his brilliant court; but neither there, nor in Italy, did he lose his homely and hearty English ways, and his love of English things.

In his tractate of the *Schoolmaster*, which appeared after his death, he bemoans the much and idle travel of Englishmen into Italy. They have a proverb there, he says, "*Un Inglese italianato è un diabolo incarnato*" (an Italianized Englishman is a devil incarnate). Going to Italy, when Tintoretto and Raphael were yet living, and when the great Medici family and the Borgias were spinning their golden wheels — was, for a young Englishman of that day, like a European trip to a young American of ours: Ascham says — "Many being mules and horses before they went, return swine and asses."

There is much other piquant matter in this old book of the *Schoolmaster;* as where he says: —

"When the child doeth well, either in the choosing or true placing of his words, let the master praise him, and say, 'Here ye do well!' For I assure you there is no such

whetstone to sharpen a good wit, and encourage a will to learning as is praise. But if the child miss, either in forgetting a word, or in changing a good with a worse, or misordering the sentence, I would not have the master frown, or chide with him, if the child have done his diligence and used no truantship: For I know by good experience, that a child shall take more profit of two faults gently warned of, than of four things rightly hit."

And this brings us to say that this good, canny, and thrifty Roger Ascham was the early teacher, in Greek and Latin, of the great Princess Elizabeth, and afterward for years her secretary. You would like to hear how he speaks of her :—

"It is your shame (I speak to you all young gentlemen of England) that one mind should go beyond you all in excellency of learning, and knowledge of divers tongues. Point forth six of the best given gentlemen of this court, and all they together show not so much good will, spend not so much time, bestow not so many hours daily, orderly, and constantly, for the increase of learning and knowledge as doth this Princess. Yea, I believe that beside her perfect readiness in Latin, Italian, French and Spanish, she readeth here now, at Windsor more Greek every day, than some prebendarys of this Church doth read Latin in a whole week."

He never speaks of her but with a hearty tenderness; nor did she speak of him, but most kindly.

At his death, she said, "She would rather that £10,000 had been flung into the sea." And — seeing her money-loving, this was very much for her to say.

In our next chapter we shall meet this prudent and accomplished Princess face to face — in her farthingale and ruff — with the jewels on her fingers, and the crown upon her head — bearing herself right royally. And around her we shall find such staid worthies as Burleigh and Richard Hooker; and such bright spirits as Sidney and Raleigh, and that sweet poet Spenser, who was in that day counting the flowing measures of that long song, whose mellow cadences have floated musically down from the far days of Elizabeth to these fairer days of ours.

CHAPTER VI.

IN our last talk we entered upon that brilliant sixteenth century, within whose first quarter three great kings held three great thrones:—Charles V. of Spain, Francis I. of France, and Henry VIII. of England. New questions were astir; Art—in the seats of Art — was blazing at its best: the recent fall of Constantinople under the Turk had sent a tide of Greek scholars, Greek art, and Greek letters flowing over Western Europe, and drifting into the antiquated courts of Oxford and Cambridge. I spoke of the magnificent Wolsey, and of his great university endowments; also, of that ripe scholar, Sir Thomas More, who could not mate his religion, or his statesmanship with the caprices of the King, and so, died by the axe. We saw Cranmer — meaning to be good, if goodness did not call for strength; we heard Latimer's swift, homely speech, and saw

Tyndale with his English Testament — both these coming to grief ; and we had glimpses of John Knox shaking the pulpit with his frail hand, and shaking all Scotch Christendom with his fearless, strident speech.

We heard the quaint psalmody of Sternhold, and the sweeter and more heathen verse of Wyatt and of Surrey ; lastly, I gave a sketch of that old schoolmaster, Roger Ascham, who by his life, tied the reigns of Henry and of Elizabeth together, and who taught Greek and Latin and penmanship and Archery to that proud princess — whom we encounter now — in her high ruff, and her piled-up head-dress, with a fair jewelled hand that puts a man's grip upon the sceptre.

Elizabethan England.

Elizabeth was in her twentieth year when she came to the throne, and it was about the middle of the sixteenth century ; the precise year being 1558. The England she was to dominate so splendidly was not a quiet England : the fierce religious controversies which had signalized the reign of Henry VIII. — who thwacked with his kingly bludgeon both ways

and all ways — and which continued under Edward VI. — who was feebly Protestant; and which had caught new vigor under Mary — who was arrant and slavish Papist — had left gouts of blood and a dreadful exasperation. Those great Religious Houses, which only a quarter of a century before, were pleasantly embayed in so many charming valleys of Great Britain — with their writing-rooms, their busy transcribing clerks — their great gardens, were, most of them, despoiled — and to be seen no more. An old Venetian Ambassador,* writing to the Seigneury in those days, says — "London itself is disfigured by the ruins of a multitude of Churches and Monasteries which once belonged to Friars and Nuns." Piers Plowman, long before, had attacked the sins growing up in the pleasant Abbey Courts; Chaucer had echoed the ridicule in his Abbot riding to Canterbury, with jingling trappings: Gower had repeated the assault in his *Vox Clamantis*, and Skelton had turned his ragged rhymes into the same current of satire. But all would have availed noth-

* Report of Giacomo Soranzo (Venetian Ambassador) under date of 1554: Rawdon Brown's Calendar State Papers, 1534–54.

ing except the arrogant Henry VIII. had set his foot upon them, and crushed them out.

There was a wild justice in it — if not an orderly one. The spoils went to fill the Royal coffers; many of those beautiful properties were bestowed upon favorites; many princely estates are still held in England, by title tracing back to those days of spoliation — a fact which will be called to mind, I suspect — with unction, in case of any great social revolution in that country. Under Mary, some of these estates had been restored to Church dignitaries; but the restoration had not been general: and Elizabeth could not if she would, and would not if she could, sanction any further restitution.

She was Protestant — but rather from policy than any heartiness of belief. It did not grieve her one whit, that her teacher, Roger Ascham, had been private secretary to bloody Mary: the lukewarmness of her great minister, Lord Burleigh, did not disturb her; she always kept wax tapers burning by a crucifix in her private chamber; a pretty rosary gave her no shock; but she *was* shocked at the marriage of any member of the priesthood, always.

In fact, if Spanish bigotry had not forced her into a resolute antagonism of Rome, I think history would have been in doubt whether to count her most a Lutheran, or most a Roman.

Yet she made the Papists smoke for it — as grimly as ever her sister Mary did the Protestants — if they stood one whit in the way of England's grasp on power.

Personality of the Queen.

I think our friend Mr. Froude, whose history we all read, is a little unfair toward Queen Bess, as he was a little over-fair, and white-wash-i-ly disposed in the case of Henry VIII.: both tendencies being attributable to a mania this shrewd historian has — for unripping and oversetting established forms of belief. I think that he not only bears with a greedy zeal upon her too commonly manifest selfishness and heartlessness, but that he enjoys putting little vicious dabs of bad color upon her picture — as when he says, "she spat, and swore like a trooper." Indeed it would seem that this clever biographer had carried a good deal of his fondness for "vicious dabs" in portraiture into

his more recent *post-mortem* exhibits; as if it were his duty and pleasure to hang out all sorts of soiled linen, in his office of Clean-Scrubber: Yet, I wish to speak with all respect of the distinguished historian — whose vigor is conspicuous — whose industry is remarkable, whose crisp sentences are delightful, but whose accuracy is not of the surest; and whose conscience does, I think, sometimes go lame — under strain of his high, rhetorical canter.

The authority for all most damnatory statements with respect to the private life of the Queen, rests upon those Spanish Relations — so minute as to be suspicious — if they were not also so savagely bitter as to twist everything to the discredit of the Protestant Sovereign. Signor Soranzo — the Venetian ambassador (whom Froude does not cite — but who had equal opportunities of observation with the Spanish informer), says of Elizabeth (in a report — not written for publication, but lying for years in the archives of Venice): "Such an air of dignified majesty pervades all her actions that no one can fail to judge her a queen. She is a good Greek and Latin scholar; and beside her native tongue she speaks Latin, French,

Spanish, and Italian *benissimo* — and her manners are very modest and affable."*

I talk thus much — and may talk more — about the personality of Queen Elizabeth, because she must be counted—in a certain not very remote sense — one of the forces that went to endow what is called the English Literature of her day — so instructed was she ; so full of talent ; so keen-sighted ; so exact — a most extraordinary woman. We must not think her greatness was factitious, and attributable to her only because she was a queen. There could be no greater mistake. She would have been great if she had been a shoemaker's daughter ; I do not mean that she would have rode a white horse at Tilbury, and made the nations shake : but she would have bound more shoes, and bound them better, and looked sharper after the affairs of her household than any cobbler's wife in the land. Elizabeth would have made a wonderful post-mistress — a splendid head of a school — with perhaps a little too large use of the ferule : and she would have had her favorites, and shown it ; but she

* Rawdon Brown's Calendar State Papers, 1554. From Venetian Archives.

would have lifted her pupils' thoughts into a high range of endeavor; she would have made an atmosphere of intellectual ambition about her; she would have struck fire from flinty souls; and so she did in her court: She inspired work — inspired imagination; may we not say that she inspired genius. That auburn hair of hers (I suppose we should have called it red, if her name had been Abigail) made an aureole, around which wit coruscated by a kind of electric affinity. It was counted worth toil to have the honor of laying a poem at her gracious feet, who was so royally a Queen — whose life, and power, and will and culture, made up a quadrature of poems.

Burleigh and Others.

And who was there of literary significance about Elizabeth in those early days of her reign? Roger Ascham was still doling out his sagacious talk, and his good precepts; but he was not a force — only what we might call a good creature. There was Sackville * (afterward the elegant Earl of Dorset);

* Thomas Sackville, b. 1527; d. 1608, was author of portion of *Mirror for Magistrates;* also associated with Thomas Norton, in production of the Tragedy of *Gorboduc.*

he was in his prime then, and had very likely written his portion of the *Mirror for Magistrates* — a fairish poetic history of great unfortunate people — completed afterward by other poets, but hardly read nowadays.

Old Tusser,* too — the farmer-poet — lived in these times; an Essex man, of about the same age as Ascham, but who probably never came nearer to the court than to sing in the choir of old St. Paul's. He had University experience, which, if it did not help his farming, on the banks of the Stour, did, doubtless, enable him to equip his somewhat prosy poems with such classic authentication and such directness and simplicities as gave to his *Pointes of Husbandrie* very great vogue. Many rhyming saws about farming, still current among old-fashioned country-folk, trace back to Master Tusser, who lived and farmed successively (tradition says not very successfully) at Ipswich, Dereham, and Norwich. His will, however, published in these later times, shows him to have been a man of considerable means.

Then there was Holinshed,† who, though the

* Thomas Tusser, b. about 1527; d. 1580.

† Raphael Holinshed, d. about 1580. First edition of his Chronicle was published in 1577.

date of his birth is uncertain, must have been of fair working age now — a homely, honest, simple-hearted chronicler (somewhat thievish, as all the old chroniclers were) but whose name is specially worth keeping in mind, because he — in all probability — supplied Shakespeare's principal historic reading, and furnished the crude material, afterward beaten out into those plaques of gold, which we call Shakespeare's Historic Plays. Therefore, we must always, I think, treat Holinshed with respect. Next, there was the great Lord Burleigh,* the chief minister and adviser of the Queen — whom she set great store by: the only man she allowed to sit in her presence; and indeed he was something heavy, both in mind and in person; but far-sighted, honest, keen, cautious, timid — making his nod count more than most men's words, and in great exigencies standing up for the right, even against the caprices of the sovereign. Whoever goes to Stamford in England should not fail to run out — a mile away only — to the princely place called Burleigh House (now the property of the Marquis of Exeter)

* William Cecil, b. 1520; d. 1598. Biography by Nares, 1828-31.

which was the home of this minister of Elizabeth's — built out of his savings, and equipped now with such paintings, such gardens, such magnificent avenues of oak, such great sweeps of velvet lawn, such herds of loitering deer as make it one of the show-places of England. Well — this sober-sided, cautious Burleigh (you will get a short, but good glimpse of him in Scott's tragic tale of Kenilworth) wrote a book — a sort of earlier Chesterfield's Letters, made up of advices for his son Robert Cecil, who was cousin, and in early life, rival of the great Francis Bacon. I will take out a tid-bit from this book, that you may see how this famous Lord Burleigh talked to his son :

"When it shall please God to bring thee to man's estate" — he says — "use great Providence, and circumspection in choosing thy wife: For from thence will spring all thy future good and evil. And it is an action of life—like unto a stratagem of War, wherein a man can err but once. If thy estate be good, match near home and at leisure: if weak — far off, and quickly. Inquire diligently of her disposition, and how her parents have been inclined in their youth. Choose not a base, and uncomely creature, altogether for Wealth ; for it will cause contempt in others, and loathing in thee: Neither make choice of a fool, for she will be thy continual disgrace, and it will irk thee to hear her talk."

A Group of Great Names.

But the greater names which went to illustrate with their splendor the times of Elizabeth, only began to come to people's knowledge after she had been upon the throne some twenty years.

Spenser was a boy of five, when she came to power: John Lilly, the author of *Euphues* which has given us the word *euphuistic*, and which provoked abundant caricatures, of more or less fairness — was born the same year with Spenser; Sir Philip Sidney a year later; Sir Walter Raleigh a year earlier (1553); Richard Hooker, the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, in 1554; Lord Bacon in 1561; Shakespeare in 1564. These are great names to stand so thickly strewed over ten or twelve years of time. I do not name them, because I lay great stress on special dates: For my own part, I find them hard things to keep in mind — except I group them thus — and I think a man or woman can work and worry at worthier particularities than these. But when Elizabeth had been twenty years a Queen, and was in the prime of her womanly powers — six years after the slaughter of

St. Bartholomew — when the first English colony had just been planted in Virginia, and Sir Francis Drake was coasting up and down the shores of California; when Shakespeare was but a lad of fourteen, and poaching (if he ever did poach there — which is doubtful) in Charlecote Park; when Francis Bacon was seventeen, and was studying in Paris — Philip Sidney was twenty-four; in the ripeness of his young manhood, and just returned from Holland, he was making love — vainly as it proved — to the famous and the ill-fated Penelope Devereaux,

Richard Hooker — of the same age, was teaching Hebrew in the University of Oxford, and had not yet made that unfortunate London marriage (tho' very near it) by which he was yoked with one whom old Izaak Walton — charitable as the old angler was — describes as a silly, clownish woman, and withal a perfect Xantippe.

The circumstances which led to this awkward marriage show so well the child-like simplicity of this excellent man, that they are worth noting. He had come up to London, and was housed where preachers were wont to go; and it being

foul weather, and he thoroughly wetted, was behoven to the hostess for dry clothes, and such other attentions as made him look upon her as a special Providence, who could advise and care for him in all things: So, he accepted her proffer to him of her own daughter, who proved to him quite another sort of Providence, and a grievous thorn in the side; and when his friends, on visits to his homestead in after years, found the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* — rocking the cradle, or minding the sheep, or looking after the kettles, and expressed sympathy — "My dear fellows," said he — "if Saints have usually a double share in the miseries of this Life, I, that am none, ought not to repine at what my Wise Creator hath appointed for me, but labor (as indeed I do daily) to submit mine to his will and possess my soul in patience and peace."

I don't know if any of our parish will care to read the *Ecclesiastical Polity;* but if you have courage thereto, you will find in this old master of sound and cumbrous English prose, passages of rare eloquence, and many turns of expression, which for their winning grace, their aptitude, their quality of

fastening themselves upon the mind, are not overmatched by those of any Elizabethan writer. His theology is old and rankly conservative; but he shows throughout a beautiful reverence for that all-embracing Law, "whose seat (as he says) is the Bosom of God, and whose voice is the Harmony of the World."*

Edmund Spenser.

As for Edmund Spenser, he was a year older at this date — twenty-five: he had taken his master's degree at Cambridge and had just returned to London from a visit to the North of England, where he had encountered some fair damsel to whom he had been paying weary and vain suit, and whom he had embalmed in his *Shepherd's Calendar* (just then being made ready for the press) under the name of Rosalind.

> "Ah, faithless Rosalind, and voyd of grace,
> That art the root of all this ruthful woe
> [My] teares would make the hardest flint to flow;"

* Richard Hooker (1553–1600). Edition of his works (by Keble) first appeared 1836. First book of *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* has been edited for Clarendon Press Series by R. W. Church, 1868.

and his tears keep a-drip through a great many of those charming eclogues — called the *Shepherd's Calendar.* Some of the commentators on Spenser have queried — gravely — whether he ever forgot this Rosalind; and whether the occurrence of the name and certain woe-worn words in some madrigal of later years did not show a wound unhealed and bleeding. We are all at liberty to guess, and I am inclined to doubt here. I think he was equal to forgetting this Rosalind before the ink of the *Shepherd's Calendar* was fairly dry. He loved dreams and fed on dreams; and I suspect enjoyed the dream of his woe more than he ever suffered from a sting of rebuff.

Indeed, much as we must all admire his poetic fervor and fancies, I do not find in him traces of heroic mould; — easily friendly rather than firmly so; — full of an effusive piety, but not coming in way of martyrdom for faith's sake; — a tenderly contemplative man, loving and sensing beauty in the same sure and abounding way in which Turner has sense of color — exhaustless in his stock of brilliant and ingenious imagery — running to similes as mountain rills run to rivers; a courtier withal —

honeyed and sometimes fulsome; a richly presentable man (if portraits may be trusted), with a well-trimmed face, a cautious face — dare I say — almost a smirking face; — the face of a self-contained man who thinks allowably well of his parts, and is determined to make the most of them. And in the brows over the fine eyes there is a bulging out — where phrenologists place the bump of language — that shows where his forte lies: No such word-master had been heard to sing since the days when Chaucer sung. He is deeply read in Chaucer too; and read in all — worth reading — who came between. His lingual aptitudes are amazing. He can tear words in tatters, and he can string them rhythmically in all shapes; he makes his own law in language, as he grows heated in his work; twists old phrases out of shape; makes new ones; binds them together; tosses them as he will to the changing level of his thought: so that whereas one may go to Chaucer, in points of language, as to an authority — one goes to Spenser as to a mine of graceful and euphonious phrases: but the authority is wanting — or, at least, is not so safe. He makes uses for words which no analogy and no good order can

recognize. And his new words are not so much the product of keen, shrewd search after what will fullest and strongest express a feeling or a thought, or give color to epithet, as they are the luxuriant outcropping of a tropical genius for language, which delights in abundant forms, and makes them with an easy show of its own fecundity, or for the chance purpose of filling a line, or meting out the bounds of an orderly prosody.

He came up to London, as I said, about the year 1578, at the invitation of a prig of a classmate, who makes him known to Philip Sidney: Sidney is the very man to recognize and appreciate the tender beauty of those woful plaints in the *Shepherd's Calendar*, and invites the poet down to Penshurst, that charming home of the Sidneys, in Kent. There, such interest is made for him that he is appointed to a secretaryship in Ireland, where the Queen's lieutenants are stamping out revolt. Spenser sees much of this fiery work; and its blaze reddens some of the pages of the *Faery Queen*. In the distribution of spoils, after the Irish revolt was put down, the poet has bestowed upon him, amongst other plums, some three thousand acres of wild land,

with Kilcolman Castle, which stands upon a valley spur of this domain. This castle is represented as an uninteresting fortress — like Johnnie Armstrong's tower in Scotland — upon the borders of a small lake or mere, and the landscape — stretching in unlovely waste around it — savage and low and tame. Yet he finds rich rural pictures there — this idealist and dreamer: let him see only so much of sky as comes between the roofs of a city alley, and he will pluck out of it a multitude of twinkling stars; let him look upon a rood square of brown grass-land, and he will set it alight with scores of daisies and of primroses.

The Faery Queen.

And it is in this easy way he plants the men and women, the hags and demons, the wizards and dragons that figure in the phantasmagoria of the *Faery Queen;* they come and go like twilight shadows; they have no root of realism.

There is reason to believe that the first cantos of this poem were blocked out in his mind before leaving England; perhaps the scheme had been talked over with his friend Sidney; in any event, it

is quite certain that they underwent elaboration at Kilcolman Castle, and some portions doubtless took color from the dreary days of rapine and of war he saw there. I will not ask if you have read the *Faery Queen:* I fear that a great many dishonest speeches are made on that score; I am afraid that I equivocated myself in youngish days; but now I will be honest in saying — I never read it through continuously and of set purpose; I have tried it — on winter nights, and gone to sleep in my chair: I have tried it, under trees in summer, and have gone to sleep on the turf: I have tried it, in the first blush of a spring morning, and have gone — to breakfast.

Yet there are many who enjoy it intensely and continuously: Mr. Saintsbury says, courageously, that it is the only long poem he honestly wishes were longer. It is certainly full of idealism; it is full of sweet fancies; it is rich in dragonly horrors; it is crammed with exquisite harmonies. But — its tenderer heroines are so shadowy, you cannot bind them to your heart; nay, you can scarcé follow them with your eyes: Now, you catch a strain which seems to carry a sweet womanly image of flesh and

blood — of heartiness and warmth. But — at the turning of a page — his wealth of words so enwraps her in glowing epithets, that she fades on your vision to a mere iridescence and a creature of Cloud-land.

"Her face so faire, as flesh it seemèd not,
But Heavenly Portrait of bright angels hew,
Clear as the skye, withouten blame or blot
Thro' goodly mixture of Complexion's dew!
And in her cheeks, the Vermeil red did shew,
Like Roses in a bed of Lillies shed,
The which ambrosial odors from them threw,
And gazers sense, with double pleasure fed,
Hable to heal the sick, and to revive the dead!

"In her faire eyes two living lamps did flame
Kindled above at the Heavenly Makers Light,
And darted fiery beams out of the same
So passing persant and so wondrous bright,
That quite bereaved the rash beholders sight.
In them the blinded God — his lustful fire
To kindle — oft assay'd, but had no might,
For with dred Majesty, and awful ire
She broke his wanton darts, and quenchèd base desire!

"Upon her eyelids many Graces sate
Under the shadow of her even brows,
Working Belgardes and amorous Retrate;
And everie one her with a grace endows,

And everie one, with meekness to her bowes ;
So glorious mirror of Celestial Grace
And soveraigne moniment of mortal vowes,
How shall frail pen describe her Heavenly face
For feare — thro' want of skill, her beauty to disgrace ?

" So faire, and thousand times more faire
She seem'd — when she, presented was, to sight.
And was y-clad, for heat of scorching aire
All in a silken *Camus*, lilly white,
Purfled upon, with many a folded plight
Which all above besprinkled was throughout
With golden Aygulets, that glistered bright
Like twinckling starres, and all the skirt about
Was hemmed with golden fringe, . . . "

and so on, by dozens, by scores, by hundreds — delicate, mellifluous stanzas — fair ladies and brazen-scaled dragons, lions and fleecy lambs, sweet purling brooks and horrors of Pandemonium, story grafted upon story, and dreams grafted upon these, and still flowing on — canto after canto — until the worldlings are tempted to exclaim, "When will he stop?" It is an exclamation that a good many lesser men than Spenser have tempted — in class-rooms, in lecture-rooms, and in pulpits. And I am wicked enough to think that if a third had been shorn away by the poet from that over-full,

and over-epitheted poem of the *Faery Queen*, it would have reached farther, and come nearer to more minds and hearts. But who — save the master — shall ever put the shears into that dainty broidery where gorgeous flowers lie enmeshed in page-long tangles, and where wanton tendrils of words enlace and tie together whole platoons of verse?

In brief, the Poem is a great, cumbrous, beautiful, bewildering, meandering Allegory, in which he assigns to every Virtue a Knight to be ensampler and defender of the same, and puts these Knights to battle with all the vices represented by elfin hags, or scaled dragons, or beautiful women; and so the battles rage and the storms beat. But we lose sight of his moral in the smoke of the conflict. The skeleton of his ethics is overlaid with the wallets of fair flesh, and with splendid trappings; his abounding figures gallop away with the logic; his roses cumber all his corn-ground. There are no passages of condensed meaning, or of wondrous intuition that give one pause, and that stick by us like a burr. There is a symphonious clatter of hammers upon golden-headed tacks, but

no such pounding blow as drives a big nail home.

All this is the criticism of a matter-of-fact man, who perhaps has no right of utterance — as if one without knowledge of music should criticise its cumulated triumphs. Many a man can enjoy a burst of balladry — of little vagrant songs — who is crushed and bored by the pretty tangles and symphonies of an opera. Spenser was poets' poet — not people's poet; hardly can be till people are steeped in that refinement, that poetic sensibility, which only poets are supposed to possess. And I am rather unpleasantly conscious that I may offend intense lovers of this great singer by such mention of him: painfully conscious, too, that it may have its source (as Saintsbury assures us must be the case) in a poetic inaptitude to give largest and adequate relish to the tender harmonies and the mythical reaches of his sweetly burdened song. But shall I not be honest?

Yet Spenser is never ribald, never vulgar, rarely indelicate, even measured by modern standards: He always has a welcoming word for honesty, and for bravery, and, I think, the welcomest word of

all for Love, which he counts, as so many young people do, the chiefest duty of man.

Once upon a time, there comes to see Spenser in his Kilcolman home — that daring adventurer, that roving knight, Sir Walter Raleigh — who is so well taught, so elegant, so brave that he can make the bright eyes even of Queen Bess twinkle again, with the courtliness of his adulation; he comes, I say, to see Spenser; — for he too has a grant of some forty thousand acres carved out of that ever-wretched and misgoverned Ireland: and Spenser, to entertain his friend, reads somewhat of the *Faëry Queene* (not more than one canto I suspect), and Sir Walter locks arms with the poet, and carries him off to London, and presents him to the Queen; and Spenser weaves subtle, honeyed flattery for this great *Gloriana;* and his book is printed; and the Queen smiles on him, and gives him her jewelled hand to kiss, and a pension of £50 a year, which the stout old Burleigh thinks too much; and which Spenser, and poets all, think too beggarly small. There are little poems that come after this, commemorating this trip to Court, and Raleigh's hob-nobbing with him —

"Amongst the coolly shade
Of the green alders, by the Mulla's shore
[Where] — he piped — I sung —
And when he sung, I piped,
By chaunge of tunes, each making other merry."

Spenser has found, too, a new *Rosalind* over amid the wilds of Ireland, to whom he addresses a cluster of gushing *Amoretti;* and she becomes eventually his bride, and calls out what seems to me that charmingest of all his poems — the *Epithalamium.* You will excuse my reciting a tender little lovely picture from it: —

"Behold, whiles she before the Altar stands
Hearing the Holy Priest that to her speaks,
And blesseth her with his two happy hands.
How the red roses flush up in her cheeks,
And the pure snow, with goodly vermeil stain
Like crimson dyed in grain:
That even the Angels, which continually
About the sacred altar do remain,
Forget the service, and about her fly,
Oft peeping in her face, that seems more fair,
The more they on it stare —
But her sad eyes still fastened on the ground,
Are govern-ed with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one look to glance awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsound.

Why blush ye, Love, to give to me your hand ?
The pledge of all our band ?
Sing, ye Sweet Angels, Allelujah sing !
That all the woods may answer, and your echos ring ! "

To my mind the gracious humanity — the exquisite naturalness of this is worth an ocean of cloying prettinesses about *Gloriana* and *Britomart.* Not very many years after this — just how many we cannot say — comes the great tragedy of his life : A new Irish rebellion (that of Tyrone) sends up its tide of fire and blood around his home of Kilcolman ; his crops, his barns, his cattle, his poor babe * — the last born — all are smothered, and consumed away in that fiery wrack and ruin. He makes his way broken-hearted to London again ; his old welcome as an adulator of the Queen is at an end ; Raleigh is not actively helpful ; Sidney is dead ; he has some cheap lodging almost under the shadow of Westminster : He is sick, maimed in body and in soul ; other accounts — not yet wholly discredited

* Grosart, in his *Life of Spenser* (pp. 236-37), gives good reasons for doubting this story which is based mainly on the Jonson-Drummond interviews. Grosart also questions — as Prof. John Wilson had done before him — all the allegations of Spenser's extreme indigence.

—represent him as miserably poor; bread, even, hard to come by; my Lord of Essex—a new patron—sends him a few guineas; and the poor poet murmurs—too late—too late!—and so he dies (1599). How glad we should have been to help him, had we been living in that time, and all this tale of suffering had been true;—so we think: and yet, ten to one we should have said—"Poor fellow, what a pity!"—and buttoned up our pockets, as we do now.

Philip Sidney.

Meantime what has become of that Philip Sidney* who flashed upon us under the eyes of Elizabeth at the age of twenty-four? You know him as the chivalric soldier and the model gentleman. Students and young people all, who are under the glamour of youthful enthusiasms, are apt to have a great fondness for Philip Sidney: But if any of my young readers chance to be projecting an essay about that courteous gentleman—and I know they will, if they have not already—I would counsel them to forego any mention of the story about the dying soldier

* Philip Sidney, b. 1554: d. 1586.

and the cup of water. It has been cruelly overworked already. Indeed it might have been matched in scores of cases upon the battle-fields of our own war: When the last shattering blow comes to our poor humanity, the better nature in us does somehow lean kindly out, in glance and in purpose. Yet Philip Sidney was certainly a man of great kindness and full of amiabilities and courtesies.

Why, pray, should he not have been? Consider that in all his young life he was wrapped in purple. It is no bad thing in any day to be born eldest son of an old and wealthy and titled family of England; but it is something more to be born eldest son of a Sidney — nephew to Leicester, prime favorite of the Queen, cousin to the Northumberlands, the Sutherlands, the Warwicks — heir to that old baronial pile of Penshurst, toward which summer loiterers go now, every year, from far-away countries — to admire its red roofs — its gray walls curtained with ivy — its tall chimneys, that have smoked with the goodly hospitalities of centuries — its charming wood-walks, that Ben Jonson and Spenser and Massinger have known — its courts and parterres and terraces, where "Sidney's sister,

Pembroke's mother," gathered posies — its far-reaching lovely landscape, with Penshurst church cropping out near by — blue, hazy heights off by Tunbridge — lanes bowered with hedge-rows — wide-lying wavy, grain-fields, and sheep feeding in the hollows of the hills. He was born heir to all this, I say, and had the best masters, the tenderest and the worthiest of mothers — who writes to him in this style,

"Your noble Father hath taken pains, with his own hand, to give you in this — His Letter — so wise precepts for you to follow with a diligent mind, as I will not withdraw your eyes from beholding, and reverent honoring the same — no, not so long a time as to read any letter from me: Wherefor — I only bless you — with my desire to God to plant in you his grace, and have always before your mind the excellent councils of my Lord, your dear Father: Farewell, my little Philip; and, once again, the Lord bless you!

"Your loving mother,

"MARIE SIDNEY."

Ought not a boy, with such a mother, and Penshurst in prospect, and cousinly relations with the Talbots and Howards and Stanleys to be gentlemanly and amiable? Then — his great-uncle — Leicester (who is Chancellor of the University)

writes up to Oxford, where young Sidney is reading for his degree — "Pray have my boy, Philip Sidney, who is delicate, excused from fasting during Lent." And there is a plot afoot to marry this young Oxford man to Anne, daughter of that Lord Burleigh I told you of, and there are letters about the negotiation still extant. Would you like to hear how Lord Burleigh discusses his daughter's affairs?

"I have been pressed," he says, "with kind offers of my lord of Leicester, and have accorded with him, upon articles (by a manner of A. B. C.) without naming persons — that — if P. S. and A. C. hereafter shall like to marry, then shall H. S. (father of P. S.) make assurances, etc., and W. C. [that's Lord Burleigh] father of A. C. shall pay, etc.: What may follow, I know not: but meanwhile P. S. and A. C. shall have full liberty."

What did follow was, that old Burleigh thought better of it, and married his daughter to a bigger title — that is Lord Oxford, a learned and elegant, but brutal man, who broke poor Anne Cecil's heart.

Sidney, after his Oxford course, and another at Cambridge (as some authorities say) went — as was the further mode — upon his travels: and goes, with the same golden luck upon him, to the great

house of Walsingham, ambassador of England, in Paris. Why not be gentle? What is to provoke? It is quite a different thing — as many another Cambridge man knew (Spenser among them), to be gentle and bland and forbearing, when illness seizes, when poverty pinches, when friends backslide, when Heaven's gates seem shut; — then, amiability and gentleness and forbearance are indeed crowning graces, and will unlock, I think, a good many of the doors upon the courts, where the weary shall be at rest.

Sidney is at Paris when that virago Catharine de' Medici was lording it over her sons, and over France; — there, too, as it chanced, through the slaughter of St. Bartholomew's day, from which bloody holocaust he presently recoils, and continues his travel over the Continent, writing very charming, practical letters to his younger brother Robert:

"You think my experience," he says, "has grown from the good things I have learned: but I know the only experience which I have gotten is, to find how much I *might* have learned and how much indeed I have missed — for want of directing my course to the right end and by the right means." And again he tells him, "not to go travel — as

many people do — merely out of a tickling humor to do as other men have done, or to talk of having been."

He goes leisurely into Italy — is for some time at the famous University of Padua; he is in Venice too during the great revels which were had there in 1574, in honor of Henry III. (of France). The Piazza of San Marco was for days and nights together a blaze of light and of splendor: what a city to visit for this young Briton, who came accredited by Elizabeth and by Leicester! The palaces of the Foscari and of the Contarini would be open to him; the younger Aldus Manutius was making imprints of the classics that would delight his eye; the temple fronts of Palladio were in their first freshness: Did he love finer forms of art — the great houses were rich in its trophies: the elder Palma and Tintoretto were still at work: even the veteran Titian was carrying his ninety-eight years with a stately stride along the Rivi of the canal: if he loved adventure, the Venetian ladies were very beautiful, and the masks of the Ridotto gave him the freedom of their smiles; the escapade of Bianca Capello was a story of only yesterday; and for other romance — the air was full of it; snatches

from Tasso's *Rinaldo** were on the lips of the gondoliers, and poetic legends lurked in every ripple of the sea that broke upon the palace steps. It is said that Sidney was painted in Venice by Paul Veronese; and if one is cunning in those matters he may be able to trace the likeness of the heir of Penshurst in some one of those who belong to the great groups of noble men and women which the Veronese has left upon the walls of the Ducal Palace.

In 1575 he came home, with all the polish that European courts and European culture could give him. We may be sure that he paid dainty compliments to the Queen — then in the full bloom of womanhood: we may be sure that she devoured them all with a relish that her queenliness could not wholly conceal. He won his sobriquet of "The Gentleman" in these times; elegantly courteous; saying the right thing just when he should say it: — perhaps too elegantly courteous — too insistent that even a "Good-morning" should be spoken at precisely the right time, and in the right key —

* The first edition of Rinaldo was printed at Venice in 1562; this great epic was completed at Padua in 1575.

too observant of the starched laws of a deportment that chills by its own consciousness of unvarying propriety, as if — well, I had almost said — as if he had been born in Boston. His favorite sister meantime has married one of the Pembrokes, and has a princely place down at Wilton, near Salisbury (now another haunt of pleasure-seekers). Sidney was often there; and he wrote for this cherished sister his book, or poem — (call it how we will) of *Arcadia;* writing it, as he says, off-hand — and without re-reading — sheet by sheet, for her pleasure: I am sorry he ever said this; it provokes hot-heads to a carelessness that never wins results worth winning. Indeed I think Sidney put more care to his *Arcadia* than he confessed; though it is true, he expressed the wish on his death-bed, that it should never be printed.

Shall I tell you anything of it — that it is an Allegory — shaped in fact after a famous Italian poem of the same name — that few people now read it continuously; that it requires great pluck to do so; and yet that no one can dip into it — high or low — without finding rich euphuisms, poetic symphonies, noble characters, dexterous experi-

mentation in verse — iambics, sapphics, hexameters, all interlaced with a sonorous grandiloquence of prose — a curious medley, very fine, and *very* dull? When published after his death it ran through edition after edition, and young wives were gravely cautioned not to spend too much time over that cherished volume. His little book of the *Defence of Poesie*, which he also wrote down at Wilton, appeals more nearly to our sympathies, and may be counted still a good and noble argument for the Art of Poetry. And Sidney gave proof of his skill in that art, far beyond anything in the *Arcadia* — in some of those amatory poems under title of *Astrophel and Stella*, which were supposed to have grown out of his fruitless love for Penelope Devereux, to which I made early reference. I cite a single sonnet that you may see his manner: —

"*Stella*, think not, that I by verse seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live — but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips mine history.
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame,
Nor so ambitious am I as to frame
A nest for my young praise in laurel tree;
In truth I vow I wish not there should be
Graved in my epitaph, a Poet's name.

Nor, if I would, could I just title make
That any laud thereof, to me should grow
Without — my plumes from other wings I take —
For nothing from *my* wit or will doth flow
Since all my words *thy* beauty doth indite,
And Love doth hold my hand, and *make* me write."

But it is, after all, more his personality than his books that draws our attention toward him, amid that galaxy of bright spirits which is gathering around the court of Elizabeth. In all the revels, and the pageants of the day the eyes of thousands fasten upon his fine figure and his noble presence. Though Scott — singularly enough — passes him by without mention, he is down at Kenilworth, when the ambitious Leicester turns his castle-gardens into a Paradise to welcome his sovereign. When he goes as ambassador to Rudolph of Germany, he hangs golden blazonry upon the walls of his house: Englishmen, everywhere, are proud of this fine gentleman, Sidney, who can talk in so many languages, who can turn a sonnet to a lady's eyebrow, who can fence with the best swordsmen of any court, who can play upon six instruments of music, who can outdance even his Grace of Anjou. His death was in keeping with his life: it hap-

pened in the war of the Low Countries, and was due to a brilliant piece of bravado; he and his companions fighting (as at Balaclava in the Charge of the Light Brigade) where there was little hope of conquest. All round them — in front — in rear — in flank — the arquebuses and the cannon twanged and roared. They beat down the gunners; they sabred the men-at-arms; thrice and four times they cut red ways through the beleaguering enemy; but at last, a cruel musket-ball came crashing through the thigh of this brave, polished gentleman — Philip Sidney — and gave him his death-wound. Twenty-five days he lingered, saying brave and memorable things — sending courteous messages, as if the sheen of royalty were still upon him — doing tender acts for those nearest him, and dying, with a great and a most worthy calm.

We may well believe that the Queen found somewhat to wipe from her cheek when the tale came of the death of "my Philip," the pride of her court. Leicester, too, must have minded it sorely: and of a surety Spenser in his far home of Kilcolman; writing there, maybe — by the Mulla shore — his

apostrophe to Sidney's soul, so full of his sweetness and of his wonderful word-craft: —

"Ah me, can so Divine a thing be dead ?
Ah no: it is not dead, nor can it die
But lives for aye in Blissful Paradise:
Where, like a new-born Babe, it soft doth lie
In bed of Lilies, wrapped in tender wise
And compassed all about with Roses sweet
And dainty violets, from head to feet.
There — thousand birds, all of celestial brood
To him do sweetly carol, day and night
And with strange notes — of him well understood
Lull him asleep in an-gelic Delight
Whilst in sweet dreams, to him presented be
Immortal beauties, which no eye may see."

Two black palls fling their shadows on the court of Elizabeth in 1587: Sidney died in October of 1586; and in the following February Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded. The next year the Spanish Armada is swept from the seas, and all England is given up to rejoicings. And as we look back upon this period and catch its alternating light and shade on the pages of the historians and in the lives of English poets and statesmen, the great Queen, in her ruff and laces, and with her coronet of jewels, seems somehow, throughout all, the central figure.

We see Raleigh the Captain of her Guard — the valiant knight, the scholar, the ready poet — but readiest of all to bring his fine figure and his stately gallantries to her court: We see Sir Francis Drake, with his full beard and bullet-head — all browned with his long voyages, from which he has come laden with ingots of Spanish gold — swinging with his sailor-gait into her august presence: We catch sight of Lord Burleigh, feeble now with the weight of years, leading up that young nephew of his — Francis Bacon, that he may kiss the Queen's hand and do service for favors which shall make him in time Lord Chancellor of England. Perhaps the rash, headstrong Oxford may be in presence, whose poor wife was once the affianced of Sidney: And the elegant Lord Buckhurst, decorous with the white hair of age, who, in his younger days, when plain Thomas Sackville, had contributed the best parts to the *Mirror for Magistrates:* Richard Hooker, too, may be there — come up from the "peace and privacy" of his country parsonage — in his sombre clerical dress, bent with study, but in the prime of his age and power, with the calm face and the severe

philosophy with which he has confronted a termagant of a wife and the beginnings of Dissent. And, if not in this presence, yet somewhere in London might have been found, in that day, a young man, not much past twenty — just up from Stratford-upon-Avon — to take his part in playing at the Globe Theatre; yet not wholly like other players. Even now, while all these worthies are gathering about the august Queen in her brilliant halls at Greenwich or at Hampton Court, this young Stratford man may be seated upon the steps of Old St. Paul's — with his chin upon his hand — looking out on the multitudinous human tide, which even then swept down Ludgate Hill, and meditating the speeches of those shadowy courtiers of his — only creatures of his day-dreams; yet they are to carry his messages of wisdom into all lands and languages.

But I must shut the books where I see these figures come and go.

CHAPTER VII.

AS we open our budget to-day, we are still under kingship of the great Queen Bess, in whose presence we saw the portentous Lord Burleigh, whose nod has passed into history; we saw, too, in our swift way, the wise, the judicious, the simple-minded, the mismarried Richard Hooker. We called Spenser before us, and had a taste of those ever-sweet poems of his — ever sweet, though ever so long. Then his friend Philip Sidney flashed across our view, the over-fine gentleman, yet full of nobility and courage, who wrote a long book, *Arcadia*, so bright with yellow splendor as to tire one; and still so full of high thinking as to warrant his fame and to lend a halo to his brave and tragic death. You may remember, too, that I made short mention of a certain John Lyly, who was about the same age with Spenser, and who, with

his pretty euphuisms came to cut a larger figure in the days of Elizabeth than many stronger men did.

John Lyly.

I recur to him now and tell you more of him, because he did in his time set a sort of fashion in letters. He was an Oxford man,* born down in Kent, and at twenty-five, or thereabout, made his fame by a book, which grew out of suggestions (not only of name but largely of intent and purpose) in the *Schoolmaster* of Roger Ascham; and thus it happens over and over in the fields of literature, that a plodding man will drop from his store a nugget, over which some fellow of lively parts will stumble into renown.

The book I refer to was called *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit*, which came into such extraordinary favor that he wrote shortly after another, called *Euphues and his England.* And the fashion that he set, was a fashion of affectations — of prettinesses of speech — of piling words on words, daintier and daintier — antithesis upon antithesis, with flavors of wide reading thrown in, and spangled

* John Lyly, b 1554; d. 1606.

with classic terms and far-fetched similes — so that ladies ambitious of literary fame larded their talk with these fine euphuisms of Mr. Lyly. Something of a coxcomb I think we must reckon him; we might almost say an Oscar Wilde of letters — posing as finely and as capable of drawing female shoals in his wake. His strain for verbal felicities, always noticeable, comparing with good, simple, downright English, as a dancing-master's mincing step, compares with the assured, steady tread of a go-ahead pedestrian, who thinks nothing of attitudes. Scott, you will remember, sought to caricature the Euphuist, in a somewhat exaggerated way, in Sir Piercie Shafton, who figures in his story of the *Monastery;* he himself, however, in the later annotations of his novel, confesses his failure, and admitted the justice of the criticism which declared Sir Piercie a bore. Shakespeare, also, at a time not far removed from Lyly's conquest, perhaps intended a slap at the euphuistic craze,* in the pedant Schoolmaster's talk of "Love's Labor's Lost."

* The style of Lyly has been traced by Dr. Landmann, an ingenious German critic, to the influence of Don Antonio de Guevara, a Spanish author, who wrote *El Libro Aureo de*

Yet there was a certain good in this massing of epithets, and in this tesselated cumulation of nice bits of language, from which the more wary and skilful of writers could choose — as from a great vocabulary — what words were cleanest and clearest. Nor do I wish to give the impression that there were no evidences of thoughtfulness or of good purpose, under Lyly's tintinnabulation of words. Hazlitt thought excellently well of him; and Charles Kingsley, in these later times, has pronounced extravagant eulogy of him. Indeed he had high moral likings, though his inspirations are many of them from Plato or Boethius; it is questionable also if he did not pilfer from Plutarch; certainly he sugar-coats with his language a great many heathen pills.

In observation he is very acute. That *Euphues* who gives name to his book, is an Athenian youth of rare parts — "well-constituted" as the Greek implies — who has lived long in Italy, and who talks in this strain of the ladies he saw on a visit to England:—

Marco Aurelio, 1529. It was translated into English by Lord Berners in 1531 (published in 1534).

"The English Damoiselles have their bookes tied to their girdles — not feathers — who are as cunning in the Scriptures as you are in Ariosto or Petrark. It is the most gorgeous court [of England] that ever I have seene or heard of; but yet do they not use their apparel so nicely as you in Italy, who thinke scorne to kneele at service, for fear of wrinckles in your silk, who dare not lift up your head to heaven, for fear of rumpling the ruffs in your neck; yet your handes, I confess, are holden up, rather I thinke, to show your ringes, than to manifest your righteousness."

Elizabeth would have very probably relished this sort of talk, and have commended the writer in person; nor can there be any doubt that, in such event, Lyly would have mumbled his thanks in kissing the royal hands: there are complaining letters of his on the score of insufficient court patronage, which are not high-toned, and which make us a little doubtful of a goodly manhood in him. Certainly his deservings were great, by reason of the plays which he wrote for her Majesty's Company of Child-players, and which were acted at the Chapel Royal and in the palaces. In some of these there are turns of expression and of dramatic incident which Shakespeare did not hesitate to convert to his larger purposes; indeed there is, up and down in them, abundance of dainty word-craft — of in-

genuity — of more than Elizabethan delicacy too, and from time to time, some sweet little lyrical outburst that holds place still in the anthologies.

One of these, with which I daresay you may be over-familiar, is worth quoting again. It is called Apelles' Song, and it is from the play of "Alexander and Campaspe:"

"Cupid and my Campaspe played
At cards for kisses — Cupid paid.
He stakes his quiver, bows and arrows,
His mother's doves, and team of sparrows:
Loses them too: then down he throws
The coral of his lip — the Rose
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how);
With these the crystal of his brow,
And then the dimple of his chin —
All these did my Campaspe win.
At last, he set her both his eyes —
She won; and Cupid blind did rise.
O Love, has she done this to thee?
What shall, alas! become of me?"

He puts, too, into imitative jingle of words the song of the Nightingale — (as Bryant has done for the Bobolink); and of the strain of the skylark nothing prettier was ever said than Mr. Lyly says:

"How, at Heaven's gate she claps her wings,
The morn not waking — till *she* sings."

Francis Bacon.

We go away from singing skylarks to find the next character that I shall cull out from these Elizabethan times to set before you: this is Lord Bacon — or, to give him his true title, Lord Verulam — there being, in fact, the same impropriety in saying Lord Bacon (if custom had not "brazed it so") that there would be in saying Lord D'Israeli for Lord Beaconsfield.

Here was a great mind — a wonderful intellect which everyone admired, and in which everyone of English birth, from Royalty down, took — and ever will take — a national pride; but, withal, few of those amiabilities ever crop out in this great character which make men loved. He can see a poor priest culprit come to the rack without qualms; and could look stolidly on, as Essex, his special benefactor in his youth, walked to the scaffold; yet the misstatement of a truth, with respect to physics, or any matter about which truth or untruth was clearly demonstrable, affected him like a galvanic shock. His biographers, Montagu and Spedding, have padded his angularities into roundness; while

Pope and Macaulay have lashed him in the grave. I think we must find the real man somewhere between them; if we credit him with a great straight-thinking, truth-seeking brain, and little or no capacity for affection, the riddle of his strange life will be more easily solved. Spedding,* who wrote a voluminous life of Bacon — having devoted a quarter of a century to necessary studies — does certainly make disastrous ripping-up of the seams in Macaulay's rhetoric; but there remain certain ugly facts relating to the trial of Essex, and the bribe-takings, which will probably always keep alive in the popular mind an under-current of distrust in respect to the great Chancellor.

He was born in London, in 1561, three years before Shakespeare, and at a time when, from his fath-

* James Spedding, b. 1803; d. 1881. His chief work was the Bacon life; and there is something pathetic in the thought of a man of Spedding's attainments, honesty of purpose, and unflagging industry, devoting thirty of the best years of his life to a vindication of Bacon's character. His aggressive attitude in respect to Macaulay is particularly shown in his *Evenings with a Reviewer* (2 vols., 8vo), in which he certainly makes chaff of a good deal of Macaulay's arraignment.

er's house in the Strand he could look sheer across the Thames to Southwark, where, before he was thirty, the Globe Theatre was built, in which Shakespeare acted. He was in Paris when his father died; there is no grief-stricken letter upon the event, but a curious mention that he had dreamed two nights before how his father's house was covered with black mortar — so intent is he on mental processes.

He had a mother who was pious, swift-thoughted, jealous, imperious, unreasonable, with streaks of tenderness.

"Be not speedy of speech," she says in one of her letters —"nor talk suddenly, but when discretion requireth, and that soberly then. Remember you have no father; and you have little enough — if not too little, regarded your kind, *no-simple* mother's wholesome advice."

And again: "Look well to your health; sup not, nor sit not up late; surely I think your drinking near to bedtime hindereth your and your brother's digestion very much: I never knew any but sickly that used it; besides ill for head and eyes." And again, in postscript: "I trust you, with yr servants, use prayers twice in a day, having been where reformation is. Omit it not for any."

And he responds with ceremony, waiving much of her excellent advice, and sometimes suggesting some favor she can do him, —

"It may be I shall have occasion to visit the Court this Vacation [he being then at Gray's Inn], which I have not done this months space. In which respect, because carriage of stuff to and fro spoileth it, I would be glad of that light bed of striped stuff which your Ladyship hath, if you have not otherwise disposed it."

Sharpish words, too, sometimes pass between them; but he is always decorously and untouchingly polite.

Indeed his protestations of undying friendship to all of high station, whom he addresses unctuously, are French in their amplitude, and French, too, in their vanities. He presses sharply always toward the great end of self-advancement — whether by flatteries, or cajolement, or direct entreaty. He believed in the survival of the fittest; and that the fittest should struggle to make the survival good — no matter what weak ones, or timid ones, or confiding ones, or emotional ones should go to the wall, or the bottom, in the struggle. His flatteries, I think, never touched the Queen, though he tried them often and gave a lurid color to his flatteries. She admired his parts as a young man; she had honored his father; she accepted his services with thanks — even the dreadful services which he

rendered in demonstrating the treason of the gallant and generous, but headstrong Earl of Essex. He never came into full possession of royal confidences, however, until James I. came to the throne: by him he was knighted, by him made Lord Chancellor, by him elevated to the peerage; and it was under him that he was brought to trial for receiving bribes — was convicted, despoiled of his judicial robes, went to prison — though it might be only for a day — and thereafter into that retirement, at once shameful and honorable, where he put the last touches to those broad teachings of "Philosophy," which the world will always cherish and revere: not the first nor the last instance in which great and fatal weaknesses have been united to great power and great accomplishment.

But lest you may think too hardly of this eminent man, a qualifying word must be said of that stain upon him — of receiving bribes: it was no uncommon thing for high judicial personages to take gifts; no uncommon thing for all high officers of the Government — nay, for the Government itself, as typified in its supreme head. And, strange as it may seem, Bacon's sense of justice

does not appear to have been swayed by the gifts he took. Spedding has demonstrated, I think, that no judgment he rendered was ever reversed by subsequent and farther hearing.* He was not in the ordinary sense a money-lover; but he did love the importance and consideration which money gave, yet was always in straits; and those unwise receivings of his went to supply the shortcomings in a very extravagant and disorderly home-life. His servants plundered him; his tradespeople fleeced him; nor do I think that the mistress of the Chancellor's household was either very wary or very winning. Almost the only time there is mention of her in his letters occurs previous to his marriage (which did not take place till he was well in middle age), and then only as "the daughter of an alderman who will bring a good dot" with her. His mother-in-law, too, appears to have been of the stage sort of

* We are disinclined, however, to accept the same biographer's over-mild treatment of the bribe-taking, as a "moral negligence" — coupling it with Dr. Johnson's moral delinquency of lying a-bed in the morning! See closing pages of *Evenings with a Reviewer.*

mother-in-law, whom he addresses (by letter) in this fashion :—

"Madam," he says, "you shall with right good-will be made acquainted with anything that concerneth your daughters, if you bear a mind of love and concord : Otherwise you must be content to be a stranger to us. For I may not be so unwise as to suffer you to be an author or occasion of dissension between your daughters and their husbands; having seen so much misery of that kind in yourself."

This looks a little as if the mother-in-law found the "grapes sour" in the Bacon gardens. I do not think there was much domesticity about him, even if home influences had encouraged it : he was without children, and not one to read poetry to his wife in a boudoir; yet his essays concerning marriage and concerning children and concerning friendship and concerning extravagance, are full of piquant truths.

Indeed two distinct lines of life ran through the career of this extraordinary man. In one he loved parade, ceremony, glitter; he stooped ungraciously to those who ranked him in factitious distinctions; was profuse and heartless in his adulation; taking great gifts with servile acknowledgment; shunning friends who were falling; court-

ing enemies who were rising: and yet through all this, and looking out from the same keen inscrutable eyes was the soul of a philosopher cognizant of all humanities, searching sharply after the largest and broadest truths; too indifferent to small ones; weighing his own shortcomings with bitter remorse; alive to everything in science that should help the advancement of the world, and absorbed in high ranges of thinking which the animosities and cares and criminalities and accidents of every-day life did not seem to reach or to disturb.

In such mood he wrote those essays, of some of which I have spoken — wonderfully compact of thought, and as wonderfully compact of language — which one should read and read again. No private library of a hundred English books is complete without a copy of Bacon's Essays. The keen sagacity and perdurable sense of his observations always engage one. Thus of Travel, he says, —

"Let him [the Traveller] sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travelleth. He that travelleth into a country before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school and not to travel."

Of Friendship: — "This communicating of a man's self to his friend, works two contrary efforts; "for it redoubleth joys and cutteth griefs in halves." Again, of the advantages of talk with a friend: —"Certain it is, that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself: and that more by an hours discourse than by a days meditation."

Thus I could go on for page after page of citations which you would approve, and which are so put in words that no mending or shortening or deepening of their force seems anyway possible. And yet this book of Essays — with all its sagacities, its ringing terseness, its stanch worldly wisdom — is one we do not warm toward. Even when he talks of friendship or marriage, death or love, a cold line of self-seeking pervades it. Of sacrifice for love's sake, for friendship's sake, or for charity's sake, there is nothing; and in that Essay on "Parents and Children" — what iciness of reflection — of suggestion! A man might talk as Bacon talks there, of the entries in a "Herd-book."

As for the *Novum Organum* and the *Augmentis*

Scientiarum — you would not read them if I were to suggest it: indeed, there is no need for reading them, except as a literary *excursus*, seeing that they have wrought their work in breaking up old, slow modes of massing knowledge, and in pouring light upon new ways; — in serving, indeed, so far as their reach went, as a great logical lever, by which subsequent inquirers have prised up a thousand hidden knowledges and ways of knowledge to the comprehension and cognizance of the world.

And the two lines of life in Francis Bacon were joined by a strange hyphen at last: He got out of his coach (which was not paid for), and in his silk stockings walked through the snow, to prosecute some scientific post-mortem experiment upon the body of a chicken he had secured by the roadside, near to London. He caught cold — as lesser men would have done; and he died of it. This date of his death (1626) brings us beyond Elizabeth's time — beyond James' time, too, and far down to the early years of Charles I. He was born, as I said, three years before Shakespeare, three years after Elizabeth came to the throne; and the *Novum Organum* was published in the same year in which

the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock — a convenient peg on which to hang the date of two great events.

He was buried in the old town of St. Alban's, of whose antiquities I have already spoken, and near to which Gorhambury, the country home of Bacon, was situated. The town and region are well worth a visit: and it is one of the few spots whither one can still go by a well-appointed English stage-coach with sleek horses — four-in-hand, which starts every morning in summer from the White Horse Cellar, in Piccadilly, and spins over the twenty miles of intervening beautiful road (much of it identical with the old Roman Watling Street) in less than two hours and a half. The drive is through Middlesex, and into "pleasant Hertfordshire," where the huge Norman tower of the old abbey buildings, rising from the left bank of the Ver, marks the town of St. Alban's. The tomb and monument of Bacon are in the Church of St. Michael's: there is still an Earl of Verulam presiding over a new Gorhambury House; and thereabout, one may find remnants of the old home of the great Chancellor and some portion of the noble gardens in which he took so much de-

light, and in which he wandered up and down, in peaked hat and in ruff, and with staff — pondering affairs of State — possibly meditating the while upon that most curious and stately Essay of his upon "Gardens," which opens thus: —

"God Almighty first planted a garden. And, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man, without which building and palaces are but gross handyworks: and a man shall ever see, that when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately, sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

Surely, we who grow our own salads and "graff" our own pear-trees may take exaltation from this: and yet I do not believe that the great Chancellor ever put his hand, laboringly, to a rake-stave: but none the less, he snuffed complacently the odor of his musk-roses and his eglantine, and looked admiringly at his clipped walls of hedges.

Thomas Hobbes.

There used to come sometimes to these gardens of Gorhambury, in Bacon's day, a young man — twenty years his junior — of a strangely subtle

mind, who caught so readily at the great Chancellor's meaning, and was otherwise so well instructed that he was employed by him in some clerical duties. His name was Thomas Hobbes; and it is a name that should be known and remembered, because it is identified with writings which had as much influence upon the current of thought in the middle of the next century (the seventeenth) as those of Herbert Spencer have now, and for somewhat similar reasons. He was a very free thinker, as well as a deep one; keeping, from motives of policy, nominally within Church lines, yet abhorred and disavowed by Church-teachers; believing in the absolute right of kings, and in self-interest as the nucleus of all good and successful schemes for the conduct of life; weighing relations to the future and a Supreme Good (if existing) with a trader's prudence, and counting Friendship "a sense of social utility." His theory of government was—a crystallization of forces, coming about regularly by the prudent self-seeking of individuals. Of divine or spiritual influences he does not take any sympathetic cognizance; hard, cold, calculating; not inspiring, not hopeful; feeding higher appetites on metaphysic husks.

Of his Deism I give this exhibit: —

"Forasmuch as God Almighty is incomprehensible, it followeth that we can have no conception or image of the Deity; and consequently, all his attributes signify our inability and defect of power to conceive anything concerning his nature, and not any conception of the same, except only this — that there is a God. For the effects, we acknowledge naturally, do include a power of their producing, before they were produced; and that power presupposeth something existent that hath such power: and the thing so existing with power to produce, if it were not eternal, must needs have been produced by somewhat before it; and that, again, by something else before that, till we come to an eternal (that is to say, the first) Power of all Powers, and first Cause of all Causes; and this is it which all men conceive by the name GOD, implying eternity, incomprehensibility, and omnipotency. And thus all that will consider may know that God is, though not *what* he is."

Cribbing his emotional nature (if he ever had any), he yet writes with wonderful directness, perspicacity, and *verve* — making "Hobbism" talked of, as Spencerism is talked of. Indeed, one does not see clearly how any man, flinging only his bare hook of logic and his sinker of reason into the infinite depths around us, can fish up anything of a helpfully spiritual sort much better than Hobbism now.

He was specially befriended by the Cavendishes, having once been tutor to a younger scion of that distinguished family; and so he came to pass his latest years in their princely home of Chatsworth, humored by the Duke, and treated by the Duchess as a pet bear — to be regularly fed and not provoked; climbing the Derbyshire hills of a morning, dining at mid-day, and at candle lighting retiring to his private room to smoke his twelve pipes of tobacco (his usual allowance) and to follow through the smoke his winding trails of thought.*

He lived to the extreme age of ninety-two, thus coming well down into the times of Charles II., who used to say of him that "he was a bear against whom the Church played her young dogs to exercise them." He lived and died a bachelor, not relishing society in general, and liking only such shrewd acute friends as could track him in his subtleties, who had the grace to applaud him, and the wise policy of concealing their antagonisms.

He is not much cited now in books, nor has his

* The extraordinary habits of Hobbes are made subject of pleasant illustrative comment in Sydney Smith's (so-called) *Sketches of Moral Philosophy*, Lecture XXVI.

name association with any of those felicities of literature which exude perennial perfumes. He was careless of graces; he stirred multitudes into new trains of thought; he fed none of them with any of the minor and gracious delights of learning. Perhaps he is best known in literary ways proper by a close and lucid translation of the *History* of Thucydides, which I believe is still reckoned by scholars a good rendering of the Greek.*

He ventured, too, upon verse in praise of Derbyshire and of the valley of the Derwent, but it is not rich or beautiful. A man who keeps his emotional nature in a strait-jacket — for security or for other purpose — may make catalogues of trees, or of summer days; but he cannot paint the lilies or a sunrise. A translation of Homer which he undertook and accomplished, when over eighty, was just as far from a success, and for kindred reasons.

* Hobbes' *Thucydides* was first published in the year 1628. An earlier English version (1550) was, in effect, only a translation of a translation, being based upon the French of Claude de Seyssel, Bishop of Marseilles. Hobbes sneers at this, and certainly made a better one — very literal, sometimes tame — sometimes vulgar, but remaining the best until the issue of Dean Smith's (1753).

George Chapman.

There was, however, another translation of Homer about those times, or a little earlier, which was of much rarer quality, and which has not lost its rare flavors even now. I speak of George Chapman's. It is not so true to the Greek as Hobbes' Thucydides; indeed not true at all to the words, but true to the spirit; and in passages where the translator's zeal was aflame catching more of the dash, and abounding flow, and brazen resonance of the old Greek poet than Pope, or Cowper, Derby, or Bryant.

The literalists will never like him, of course; he drops words that worry him — whole lines indeed with which he does not choose to grapple; he adds words, too — whole lines, scenes almost; there is vulgarity sometimes, and coarseness; he calls things by their old homely names; there is no fine talk about the chest or the abdomen, but the Greek lances drive straight through the ribs or to the navel, and if a cut be clean and large — we are not told of crimson tides — but the blood gurgles out in great gouts as in a slaughter-house; there may be over-plainness, and over-heat, and over-stress;

but nowhere weakness; and his unwieldly, staggering lines — fourteen syllables long — forge on through the ruts which the Homeric chariots have worn, bouncing and heaving and plunging and jolting, but always lunging forward with their great burden of battle, of brazen shields, and ponderous war-gods. I hardly know where to cut into the welter of his long lines for sample, but in all parts his brawny pen declares itself. Take a bit from that skrimmage of the Sixteenth Book where—

"The swift Meriones
Pursuing flying Acamas, just as he got access
To horse and chariot — overtook, and dealt him such a blow
On his right shoulder that he left his chariot, and did strow
The dusty earth: life left limbs, and night his eyes possessed.
Idomeneus his stern dart at Erymas addressed,
As — like to Acamas — he fled; it cut the sundry bones
Beneath his brain, betwixt his neck and foreparts, and so runs,
Shaking his teeth out, through his mouth, his eyes all drowned in blood;
So through his nostrils and his mouth, that now dart-open stood,
He breathed his spirit."

And again that wonderful duel between Patroclus and the divine Sarpedon:

"Down jumped he from his chariot, down leaped his foe as light,
And as, on some far-looking rock, a cast of vultures fight,
— Fly on each other, strike and truss — part, meet, and then stick by,
Tug, both with crooked beaks and seres, cry, fight, and fight and cry;
So fiercely fought these angry kings, and showed as bitter galls."

What a description this old Chapman would have made of a tug at foot-ball!

Another fragment I take from the Twenty-first Book, where the River God roars and rages in the waters of Scamander against Achilles:

——. "Then swell'd his waves, then rag'd, then boil'd again
Against Achilles, up flew all, and all the bodies slain
In all his deeps, of which the heaps made bridges to his waves
He belch'd out, roaring like a bull. The unslain yet he saves
In his black whirl-pits, vast and deep. A horrid billow stood
About Achilles. On his shield the violence of the Flood
Beat so, it drove him back, and took his feet up, his fair palm
Enforc'd to catch into his stay a broad and lofty elm,
Whose roots he tossed up with his hold, and tore up all the shore."

When any of us can make as spirited a translation as that, I think we can stand a scolding from the teachers for not being literal. George Chapman lived a very long life, and did other things worthily; wrote a mass of dramas* — but not of the very best; they belong to the class of plays those people talk of who want to talk of things nobody has read. I think better and richer things are before us.

Marlowe.

Did it ever happen to you to read upon a summer's day that delightful old book — of a half century later — called *The Complete Angler;* and do you remember how, on a certain evening when the quiet Angler had beguiled himself with loitering under beech-trees and watching the lambs and listening to the birds, he did encounter, in an adjoining field, a handsome milkmaid, who lifted up

* Among the best known with which Chapman's name is connected (jointly with Ben Jonson's and Marston's) is "*Eastward Hoe!*" containing a good many satirical things upon the Scotch — which proved a dangerous game — under James; and came near to putting the authors in limbo.

her voice — which was like a nightingale's — to an old-fashioned song, beginning? —

> "Come live with me and be my love,
> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That valleys, groves, or hills, or field
> Or woods, or steepy mountains yield—
>
> And I will make thee beds of roses
> And then a thousand fragrant posies
> A cap of flowers and a kirtle
> Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle."

Well, that song of the milkmaid, with its setting of verdant meads and silver streams and honeysuckle hedges keeps singing itself in a great many ears to-day: And it was written by Christopher Marlowe,* one of the most harum-scarum young dare-devils of Elizabethan times. He was born in the same year with Shakespeare — down in Canterbury, or near by (whither we saw St. Augustine carrying Christian crosses) — was son of a shoemaker who lived thereabout, yet came somehow to be a Cambridge man, drifted thereafter to London — full of wit and words of wantonness; developing early; known for a tragedy that caught the ear

* B. 1564; d. 1593.

of the town six years before Shakespeare had published the "Venus and Adonis." He was an actor, too, as so many of the dramatic wits of that day were — maybe upon the same boards where Shakespeare was then certainly a mender, if not a maker of parts. Did they hobnob together? Did they compare plots? If we only knew: but we do not.

The critics of the days closely succeeding said he would have rivalled Shakespeare if he had lived: Doubtless he would have brought more learning to the rivalry; perhaps an equal wit — maybe an even greater rhythmic faculty and as dauntless and daring imaginative power; but dignity and poise of character were not in him. He died — stabbed — in a drunken brawl before he was thirty.* In his tragedies — if you read them — you will find the beat and flow and rhythm — to which a great

* Henceforth one who would know of Marlowe, and read what he wrote, in text which comes nearest the dramatist's own (for we can hardly hope for absolute certainty) should consult the recent scholarly edition, edited by A. H. Bullen (Nimmo, 1884), in three volumes. We doubt, however, if such popular re-establishment of the poet's fame can be anticipated as would seem to be foreshadowed in the wishes and glowing encomiums of his editor.

many of the best succeeding English tragedies were attuned. He scored first upon British theatre-walls, with fingers made tremulous by tavern orgies, a great sampler of dramatic story, by which scores of succeeding play-writers set their copy; but into these copies many and many a one of lesser power put a grace, a tenderness, and a dignity which never belonged to the half-crazed and short-lived Marlowe. You will remember him best perhaps as the author of the pleasant little madrigal of which I cited a verselet; and if you value the delicatest of description, you will relish still more his unfinished version of the Greek story of "Hero and Leander" — a pregnant line of which —

"who ever loved that loved not at first sight"

— has the abiding honor of having been quoted by Shakespeare in his play of "As You Like It."

I leave Marlowe — citing first a beautiful bit of descriptive verse from his "Hero and Leander:"—

"At Sestos Hero dwelt: Hero the fair,
Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,
And offered as a dower his burning throne,
Where she should sit for men to gaze upon.

The outside of her garments were of lawn,
— The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn.

Upon her head she wore a myrtle wreath
From thence her veil reached to the ground beneath ;
Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,
Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives ;
Many would praise the sweet smell, as she past,
When 'twas the odor that her breath forth cast ;
And there*for* honey-bees have sought in vain
And beat from thence, have lighted there again.
About her neck hung chains of pebble stone,
Which, lighted by her neck, like diamonds shone.
She wore no gloves ; for neither sun nor wind
Would burn or parch her hands, but, to her mind ;
Or warm, or cool them ; for they took delight
To play upon those hands, they were so white.

Some say, for her the fairest Cupid pin'd
And, looking in her face, was strooken blind.
But this is true ; so like was one the other,
As he imagined Hero was his mother :
And often-times into her bosom flew,
About her naked neck his bare arms threw,
And laid his childish head upon her breast
And, with still panting rock't, there took his rest."

I think all will agree that this is very delicately done.

A Tavern Coterie.

But let us not forget where we are, and where we are finding such men and such poems: we are in London and are close upon the end of the sixteenth century; there are no morning newspapers; these came long afterward; but the story of such a death as that of Marlowe, stabbed in the eye — maybe by his own dagger — would spread from tongue to tongue; (possibly one of his horrific dramas had been played that very day): certainly the knowledge of it would come quick to all his boon friends — actors, writers, wits — who were used to meet, maybe at the Falcon on Bankside, or possibly at the Mermaid Tavern.

This Mermaid Tavern was a famous place in those and in succeeding days. It stood on Cheapside (between Friday and Bread Streets) gorgeous with three ranges of Elizabethan windows, that gave look-out upon an array of goldsmiths' shops which shone across the way. It was almost in the shadow of the Church of St. Mary le Bow, burned in the great fire, but having its representative tower and spire — a good work of Christopher

Wren — standing thereabout in our time, and still holding out its clock over the sidewalk.

And the literary friends who would have gathered in such a place to talk over the sad happening to Kit Marlowe are those whom it behoves us to know, at least by name. There, surely would be Thomas Lodge,* who was concerned in the writing of plays; wrote, too, much to his honor, a certain novel (if we may call it so) entitled *Rosalynde*, from which Shakespeare took the hint and much of the pleasant machinery for his delightful drama of "As You Like It." This Lodge was in his youth hail fellow with actors who gathered at taverns; and — if not actor himself — was certainly a lover of their wild ways and their feastings. He admired *Euphues* overmuch, was disposed to literary affectations and alliteration — writing, amongst other things, *A Nettle for Nice Noses.* He was, too, a man of the world and wide traveller; voyaged with Cavendish, and was said to be engaged in a British raid upon the Canaries. In later years he became a physician of soberly habits and much credit, dying of the plague in 1625.

* B. about 1556; d. 1625.

Nashe* also would have been good mate-fellow with Marlowe; a Cambridge man this — though possibly "weaned before his time;" certainly most outspoken, hard to govern, quick-witted, fearless, flinging his fiery word-darts where he would. Gabriel Harvey, that priggish patron of Spenser, to whom I have alluded, found this to his cost. Indeed this satirist came to have the name of the English Aretino — as sharp as he, and as wild-living, and wild-loving as he.

Nashe was a native of Lowestoft, on the easternmost point of English shore, in Suffolk, not far from those potteries (of Gurton) whose old quaint products collectors still seek for and value. Dr. Grosart, in the Huth Library, has built a wordy monument to his memory; we do not say it is undeserved; certainly he had a full brain, great readiness, graphic power, and deep love for his friends. Like Lodge, he travelled: like him took to his wits to pay tavern bills; a sharp fellow every way. He lent a hand, and a strong one, to that tedious, noisy, brawling ecclesiastic controversy of his day — called the *Mar-Prelate* one; a controversy full of

* Thomas Nashe, b. about 1564; d. 1601.

a great swash of those prickly, sharp-tasted, biting words — too often belonging to church quarrels — and which men hardly approach for comment, even in our time, without getting themselves pricked by contact into wrathful splutter of ungracious language.

One may get a true taste (and I think a surfeit) of his exuberance in epithet, and of his coarse but rasping raillery in his *Pierce Penilesse*. Here is one of his pleasant lunges at some "Latinless" critic: — "Let a scholar write and he says — 'Tush, I like not these common fellows'; let him write well, and he says — 'Tush, it's stolen out of some book.'"

Then there was Robert Greene * — a Reverend, but used to tavern gatherings, and whose story is a melancholy one, and worth a little more than mere mention. He was a man of excellent family, well nurtured, as times went; native of the old city of Norwich, in Norfolk; probably something older than either Marlowe or Shakespeare; studied at St.

* B. 1560 (?); d. 1592. See Grosart's edition of his writings (in Huth Library) where Dr. G. gives the best color possible to his life and works.

John's, Cambridge — "amongst wags" — he says in his *Repentance* — "as lewd as myself;" was a clergyman (after a sort); pretty certainly had a church at one time; married a charming wife in the country, but going up to that maelstrom of London fell into all evil ways: wrote little poems a saint might have written, and cracked jokes with his tongue that would make a saint shudder; deserted his wife and child; became a red-bearded bully, raging in the taverns, with unkempt hair: Yet even thus and there (as if all England in those Elizabethan times bloomed with lilies and lush roses, which lent their perfume to all verse the vilest might write) inditing poems having a tender pathos, which will live. Take these verselets for instance; and as you read them, remember that he had deserted his pure, fond, loving wife and his prattling boy, and was more deeply sunk in ways of debauchery than any of his fellows; 'tis a mother's song to her child: —

"Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old, there's grief enough for thee.
Streaming tears that never stint,
Like pearl-drops from a flint,

Fell by course from his eyes,
That one another's place supplies.
Thus he grieved in every part,
Tears of blood fell from his heart
When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow — father's joy.
The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt;
More he crowed more we cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide;
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother — baby bless —
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.
Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old, there's grief enough for thee."

And the poet who wrote this — putting tenderness into poems of the affections, and a glowing color into pastoral verse, and point and delicacy into his prose — wrote also *A Groates worth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance*, and he died of a surfeit on pickled herring and Rhenish wine.

In that 'Groat's worth of Wit' (published after his death) there is a memorable line or two — being probably the first contemporary notice of Shakespeare that still has currency; and it is in the form of a gibe: —

"There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygres heart wrapt in a players hide, supposes hee is as well able to bombast out a blanke-verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute Johannes-fac-totum, is in his owne conceyt the onely Shake-Scene in a countrey."

How drolly it sounds — to hear this fine fellow, broken up with drink and all bedevilments, making his envious lunge at the great master who has perhaps worried him by theft of some of his dramatic methods or schemes, and who gives to poor Greene one of his largest titles to fame in having been the subject of his lampoon!

It gives added importance, too, to this gibe, to know that it was penned when the writer, impoverished, diseased, deserted by patrons, saw death fronting him; and it gives one's heart a wrench to read how this debauched poet — whose work has given some of the best color to the "Winter's Tale" of Shakespeare — writes with faltering hand, begging his "gentle" wife's forgiveness, and that she would see that the charitable host, who has taken him in, for his last illness, shall suffer no loss — then, toying with the sheets, and "babbling o' green fields," he dies.

Keen critics of somewhat later days said Shake-

speare had Greene's death in mind when he told the story of Falstaff's.

It is quite possible that all these men I have named will have encountered, off and on, at their tavern gatherings, the lithe, youngish fellow, large browed and with flashing eyes, who loves Rhenish too in a way, but who loves the altitudes of poetic thought better; who is just beginning to be known poet-wise by his "Venus and Adonis" — whose name is William Shakespeare — and who has great aptitude at fixing a play, whether his own or another man's; and with Burbage for the leading parts, can make them take wonderfully well.

Possibly, too, in these tavern gatherings would be the young, boyish Earl of Southampton, who is associated with some of the many enigmas respecting Shakespeare's Sonnets, and whom we Americans ought to know of, because he became interested thereafter in schemes for colonizing Virginia, and has left his name of Southampton to one of the Virginia counties; and, still better, is associated with that beautiful reach of the Chesapeake waters which we now call "Hampton Roads."

In that company too — familiar with London

taverns in later Elizabethan years — the beefy Ben Jonson was sure to appear, with his great shag of hair, and his fine eye, and his coarse lip, bubbling over with wit and with Latin: he, quite young as yet; perhaps just now up from Cambridge; ten years the junior of Shakespeare; and yet by his bulky figure and doughty air dominating his elders, and sure to call the attention of all idlers who hung about the doors of the Mermaid. He may be even now plotting his first play of "Every Man in his Humour," or that new club of his and Raleigh's devising, which is to have its meeting of jolly fellows in the same old Cheapside tavern, and to make its rafters shake with their uproarious mirth. For the present we leave them all there — with a May sun struggling through London fogs, and gleaming by fits and starts upon the long range of jewellers' shops, for which Cheapside was famous — upon the White Cross and Conduit, whereat the shop-girls are filling their pails — upon the great country wains coming in by Whitechapel Road — upon the tall spire of St. Mary le Bow, and upon the diamond panes of the Mermaid tavern, to whose recesses we have just seen the burly figure of Ben Jonson swagger in.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN opening the preceding chapter I spoke of that dainty John Lyly, who first set a fashion in letters, and whose daintiness hid much of the strength and cleverness that were in him: I spoke of the wonderful twin development of the Lord Chancellor Bacon — selfish and ignoble as a man, serene and exalted as a philosopher; and I tried to fasten in the reader's mind the locality of his tomb and home at the old town of St. Alban's — a short coach-ride away from London, down in "pleasant Hertfordshire:" I spoke of Hobbes (somewhat before his turn) whose free-thinking — of great influence in its day, and the sharply succeeding days — is supplemented by more acute and subtle, if not more far-reaching, free-thinking now. I quoted the Homer of Chapman, under whose long and staggering lines there burned always true Homeric fire. I cited Marlowe, because his youth and power

promised so much, and the promise so soon ended in an early and inglorious death. Then came Lodge, Nashe, and Greene, mates of Marlowe, all well-bred, all having an itch for penwork, and some of them for the stage; all making rendezvous — what time they were in London — at some tavern of Bankside, or at the Mermaid, where we caught a quick glimpse of Ben Jonson, and another of the Stratford player.

George Peele.

I might, however, have added to the lesser names that decorated the closing years of the sixteenth century that of George Peele,* of Devonshire birth, but, like so many of his fellows, a university man: he came to be a favorite in London; loved taverns and wine as unwisely as Greene; was said to have great tact for the ordering of showy pageants; did win upon Queen Elizabeth by his "Arraignment of Paris" (half masque and half play) represented by the children of the Chapel Royal — and carrying luscious flattery to the ready ears of Eliza, Queen of —

* B. 1558 or thereabout; and d. 1598.

"An ancient seat of Kings, a second Troy,
Y'compassed round with a commanding sea;
Her people are *y*-clepéd *Angeli.*
This paragon, this only, this is she
In whom do meet so many gifts in one
In honor of whose name the muses sing."

Yet even such praises did not keep poor Peele from hard fare and a stinging lack of money.

"An Old Wives Tale," which he wrote, has conjurers and dragons in it, with odd twists of language which remind one of the kindred and nonsensical jingle of "Patience" or "Pinafore:"—

"Phillida, Philleridos — pamphilida, florida, flortos;
Dub — dub a-dub, bounce! quoth the guns
With a sulpherous huff-snuff!"

This play is further notable for having supplied much of the motive for the machinery and movement of Milton's noble poem of *Comus.* It is worth one's while to compare the two. Of course Peele will suffer — as those who make beginnings always do.

This writer is said to have been sometime a shareholder with Shakespeare in the Blackfriars Theatre; he was an actor, too, like his great contemporary; and besides the plays which carried a

wordy bounce in them, wrote a very tender scriptural drama about King David and the fair Bethsabe, with charming quotable things in it. Thus—

"Bright Bethsabe gives earth to my desires,
Verdure to earth, and to that verdure — flowers;
To flowers — sweet odors, and to odors — wings
That carries pleasure to the hearts of Kings!"

And again:—

"Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,
And brings my longings tangled in her hair
To joy her love, I'll build a Kingly bower
Seated in hearing of a hundred streams."

Tom Campbell said—"there is no such sweetness to be found in our blank verse anterior to Shakespeare." And for his lyrical grace I cannot resist this little show, from his "Arraignment of Paris:"—

Œnone [*singeth and pipeth*].

"Fair and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be;
The fairest shepherd on our green,
A love for any lady."

And Paris.

"Fair and fair and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be:
Thy love is fair for thee alone
And for no other lady."

Then Œnone.

" My love is fair, my love is gay,
As fresh as bin the flowers in May,
And of my love my roundelay,
My merry, merry, merry roundelay,
Concludes with Cupid's curse,
They that do change old love for new,
Pray Gods, they change for worse!"

Thomas Dekker.

Dekker was fellow of Peele and of the rest;* he quarrelled bitterly with Ben Jonson — they beating each other vilely with bad words, that can be read now (by whoso likes such reading) in the *Poetaster* of Jonson, or in the *Satiromastix* of Dekker. 'Twould be unfair, however, to judge him altogether by his play of the cudgels in this famous controversy. There is good meat in what Dekker wrote: he had humor; he had pluck; he had gift for using words — to sting or to praise — or to beguile one. There are traces not only of a Dickens flavor

* Thomas Dekker, b. about 1568; d. about 1640. Best edition of his miscellaneous works that of Grosart (Huth Library), which is charming in its print and its pictures — even to the poet in his bed, busy at his *Dreame*.

in him, but of a Lamb flavor as well; and there is reason to believe that, like both these later humorists, he made his conquests without the support of a university training. Swinburne characterizes him as a "modest, shiftless, careless nature:" but he was keen to thrust a pin into one who had offended his sensibilities; in his plays he warmed into pretty lyrical outbreaks, but never seriously measured out a work of large proportions, or entered upon execution of such with a calm, persevering temper. He was many-sided, not only literary-wise, but also conscience-wise. It seems incredible that one who should write the coarse things which appear in his *Bachelor's Banquet* should also have elaborated, with a pious unction (that reminds of Jeremy Taylor) the saintly invocations of the *Foure Birds of Noah's Ark:* and as for his *Dreame* it shows in parts a luridness of color which reminds of our own Wigglesworth — as if this New England poet of fifty years later may have dipped his brush into the same paint-pot. I cite a warm fragment from his *Dreame of the Last Judgement;*—

"Their cries, nor yelling did the Judge regard,
For all the doores of Mercy up were bar'd:
Justice and Wrath in wrinkles knit his forhead,
And thus he spake: You cursed and abhorred,
You brood of Sathan, sonnes of death and hell,
In fires that still shall burne, you still shall dwell;
In hoopes of Iron: then were they bound up strong,
(Shrikes [shrieks] being the Burden of their dolefull song)
Scarce was Sentence breath'd-out, but mine eies
Even saw (me thought) a Caldron, whence did rise
A pitchy Steeme of Sulphure and thick Smoake,
Able whole coapes of Firmament to choake:
About this, Divels stood round, still blowing the fire,
Some, tossing Soules, some whipping them with wire,
Across the face, as up to th' chins they stood
In boyling brimstone, lead and oyle, and bloud."

It is, however, as a social photographer that I wish to call special attention to Dekker; indeed, his little touches upon dress, dinners, bear-baitings, watermen, walks at *Powles*, Spanish boots, tavern orgies — though largely ironical and much exaggerated doubtless, have the same elements of nature in them which people catch now with their pocket detective cameras. His *Sinnes of London*, his answer to *Pierce Pennilesse*, his *Gull's Horne Booke* are full of these sketches. This which fol-

lows, tells how a young gallant should behave himself in an ordinary:—

"Being arrived in the room, salute not any but those of your acquaintance; walke up and downe by the rest as scornfully and as carelessly as a Gentleman-Usher: Select some friend (having first throwne off your cloake) to walke up and downe the roome with you, . . . and this will be a meanes to publish your clothes better than Powles, a Tennis court, or a Playhouse; discourse as lowd as you can, no matter to what purpose if you but make a noise, and laugh in fashion, and have a good sower face to promise quarrelling, you shall be much observed.

"If you be a souldier, talke how often you have beene in action: as the *Portingale* voiage, Cales voiage, besides some eight or nine imploiments in Ireland. . . . And if you perceive that the untravell[d] Company about you take this doune well, ply them with more such stuffe, as how you have interpreted betweene the French king and a great Lord of Barbary, when they have been drinking healthes together, and that will be an excellent occasion to publish your languages, if you have them: if not, get some fragments of French, or smal parcels of Italian, to fling about the table: but beware how you speake any Latine there."

And he goes on to speak of the three-penny tables and the twelve-penny tables, and of the order in which meats should be eaten — all which as giving glimpses of something like the every-day, actual life of the ambitious and the talked-of young fel-

lows about London streets and taverns is better worth to us than Dekker's dramas.

Michael Drayton.

We encounter next a personage of a different stamp, and one who, very likely, would have shaken his head in sage disapproval of the flippant advices of Dekker; I refer to Michael Drayton,* who wrote enormously in verse upon all imaginable subjects; there are elegiacs, canzonets, and fables; there are eclogues, and heroic epistles and legends and *Nimphidia* and sonnets. He tells of the Barons' Wars, of the miseries of Queen Margaret, of how David killed Goliath, of Moses in the burning bush — in lines counting by thousands; *Paradise Lost* stretched six times over would not equal his pile of print; and all the verse that Goldsmith ever wrote, compared with Drayton's portentous mass would seem like an iridescent bit of cockle-shell upon a sea of ink. This protracting writer was a Warwickshire man — not a far-off countryman of

* Drayton, b. 1563; d. 1631. An edition of his works (still incomplete) by Rev. R. Hooper is the most recent.

Shakespeare, and a year only his senior; a respectable personage, not joining in tavern bouts, caring for himself and living a long life. His great poem of *Poly-olbion* many know by name, and very few, I think, of this generation ever read through. It is about the mountains, rivers, wonders, pleasures, flowers, trees, stories, and antiquities of England; and it is twenty thousand lines long, and every line a long Alexandrine. Yet there are pictures and prettinesses in it, which properly segregated and detached from the wordy trails which go before and after them, would make the fortune of a small poet. There are descriptions in it, valuable for their utter fidelity and a fulness of nomenclature which keeps alive pleasantly ancient names. Here, for instance, is a summing up of old English wild-flowers, where, in his quaint way, he celebrates the nuptials of the river Thames (who is groom) with the bridal Isis, that flows by Oxford towers. It begins at the one hundred and fiftieth line of the fifteenth song of the fiftieth part:—

"'The Primrose placing first, because that in the Spring
It is the first appears, then only flourishing;
The azuréd Hare-bell next, with them they gently mix'd

T' allay whose luscious smell, they Woodbine plac'd betwixt;
Amongst those things of scent, there prick they in the Lily,
And near to that again, her sister — Daffodilly
To sort these flowers of show, with th' other that were so sweet,
The Cowslip then they couch, and the Oxlip, for her meet;
The Columbine amongst, they sparingly do set,
The yellow King-cup wrought in many a curious fret;
And now and then among, of Eglantine a spray,
By which again a course of Lady-smocks they lay;
The Crow-flower, and thereby the Clover-flower they stick,
The Daisy over all those sundry sweets so thick."

The garden-flowers follow in equal fulness of array; and get an even better setting in one of his Nymphals, where they are garlanded about the head of Tita; and in these pretty Nymphals, and still more in the airy, fairy *Nymphidia* — with their elfins and crickets and butterflies, one will get an earlier smack of our own "Culprit Fay." Those who love the scents of ancient garden-grounds — as we do — will relish the traces of garden love in this old Warwickshire man. In his Heroic Epistles, too, one will find a mastership of ringing couplets: and there are spirit and dash in that clanging battle

ode of his which sets forth the honors and the daring of Agincourt. Its martial echoes — kept alive by Campbell ("Battle of the Baltic") and revived again in Tennyson's "Balaclava," warrant me in citing two stanzas of the original: —

"Warwick in blood did wade,
Oxford the foe invade,
And cruel slaughter made
Still as they ran up;
Suffolk his axe did ply,
Beaumont and Willoughby
Bear them right doughtily,
Ferrers and Fanhope.

"They now to fight are gone;
Armour on armour shone,
Drum now to drum did groan,
To hear, was wonder;
That, with the cries they make,
The very earth did shake,
Trumpet to trumpet spake,
Thunder to thunder." *

*There is an exquisite sonnet usually attributed to him beginning — "Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;" but this is so very much better than all his other sonnets, that I cannot help sharing the doubts of those who question its Drayton origin. If Drayton's own, the sonnet certainly shows a delicacy of expression, and a romanticism of hue quite exceptional with him.

Ben Jonson.

I now go back to that friend of Drayton's — Ben Jonson,* whom we saw at the closing of the last chapter going into the tavern of the Mermaid. He goes there, or to other like places, very often. He is a friend no doubt of the landlady; he is a friend, too, of all the housemaids, and talks university chaff to them; a friend, too, of all such male frequenters of the house as will listen to him, and will never dispute him; otherwise he is a slang-whanger and a bear.

He was born, as I have said, some years after Shakespeare, but had roared himself into the front ranks before the people of London were thoroughly satisfied that the actor-author of "Richard III." was a better man than Ben. Very much of gossip with respect to possible jealousies between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson may be found in the clumsy, bundled-up life of the latter by William Gifford.†

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* Ben Jonson, b. 1573; d. 1637.

† Prefacing the edition of Jonson's works of 1816; also in the elegant re-issue of the same — under editorship of Colonel Cunningham in 1875. Gifford seems to have spent

Jonson was born probably in the west of London — and born poor; but through the favor of some friends went to Westminster School, near to which his step-father, who was a bricklayer, lived: afterward, through similar favor, he went to Cambridge* — not staying very long, because called home to help that step-father at his bricklaying. But he did stay long enough to get a thorough taste for learning, and a thorough grounding in it. So he fretted at the bricks, and ran off and enlisted — serving a while in the Low Countries, where poor Philip Sidney met his death, and coming back, a swaggerer, apt with his sword and his speech, into which he had grafted continentalisms; apt at a quarrel, too, and comes to fight a duel, and to kill his man.† For this he

his force (of a biographic sort) in picking up from various contemporary authors whatever contained a sneer at Jonson, and exploding it, after blowing it up to its fullest possible dimensions; — reminding one of those noise-loving boys who blow up discarded and badly soiled paper-bags, only to burst them on their knees.

* Ward (*Ency. Br.*) is inclined to doubt his going at all to Cambridge: I prefer, however, to follow the current belief — as not yet sufficiently "upset."

† The facts regarding this "felony" of Jonson's have

went to prison, getting material this way — by hard rubs with the world — for the new work which was ripening in the mind of this actor-author. So, full of all experiences, full of Latin, full of logic, full of history, full of quarrel, full of wine (most whiles) this great, beefy man turned poet. I do not know if you will read — do not think the average reader of to-day will care to study — his dramas. The stories of them are involved, but nicely adjusted as the parts of an intricate machine: you will grow tired, I dare say, of matching part to part; tired of their involutions and evolutions; tired of the puppets in them that keep the machinery going; tired of the passion torn to tatters; tired of the unrest and lack of all repose. Yet there are abounding evidences of wit — of more learning than in Shakespeare, and a great deal drearier; aptnesses of expression, too, which show a keen knowledge of word-meanings and of etymologies; real and deep acquirement manifest, but

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been subject of much and varied averment: recent investigation has brought to light the "Indictment" on which he was arraigned, and some notes of the "Clerk of the Peace." See *Athenæum*, March 6, 1886.

worn like stiff brocade, or jingling at his pace, like bells upon the heels of a savage. You wonder to find such occasional sense of music with such heavy step — such delicate poise of such gross corporosity.

He helped some hack-writer to put Bacon's essays into Latin — not that Bacon did not know his Latin; but the great chancellor had not time for the graces of scholastics. Ben wrote an English Grammar, too, which — for its syntax, so far as one may judge from that compend of it which alone remains — is as good as almost any man could invent now. Such learning weighed him down when he put on the buskins, and made the stage tremble with his heaviness. But when he was at play with letters — when he had no plot to contrive and fabricate and foster, and no character to file and finish, and file again, and to fit in with precise order and methodic juxtaposition — when a mad holiday masque — wild as the "Pirates of Penzance" — tempted him to break out into song, his verse is rampant, joyous, exuberant — blithe and dewy as the breath of May-day mornings: See how a little

damsel in the dance of his verse sways and pirouettes —

> "As if the wind, not she did walk;
> Nor pressed a flower, nor bowed a stalk!"

Then, again, in an Epithalamion of his *Underwoods*, as they were called, there is a fragment of verse, which, in many of its delicious couplets, shows the grace and art of Spenser's wonderful "Epithalamion," which we read a little time ago :—He is picturing the bridesmaids strewing the bride's path with flowers : —

> "With what full hands, and in how plenteous showers
> Have they bedewed the earth where she doth tread,
> As if her airy steps did spring the flowers,
> And all the ground were garden, where she led."

Such verses do not come often into our newspaper corners, from first hands : such verses make one understand the significance of that inscription which came by merest accident to be written on his tomb in Westminster Abbey — "O rare Ben Jonson!"

I do not believe I shall fatigue you — and I know I shall keep you in the way of good things if I give

another fragment from one of his festal operettas; — the "Angel" is describing and symbolizing Truth, in the *Masque of Hymen*:—

"Upon her head she wears a crown of stars,
Thro' which her orient hair waves to her waist,
By which believing mortals hold her fast,
And in those golden cords are carried even
Till with her breath she blows them up to Heaven.
She wears a robe enchased with eagles' eyes,
To signify her sight in mysteries;
Upon each shoulder sits a milk-white dove,
And at her feet do witty serpents move;
Her spacious arms do reach from East to west,
And you may see her heart shine thro' her breast.
Her right hand holds a sun with burning rays
Her left, a curious bunch of golden keys
With which Heaven's gates she locketh and displays.
A crystal mirror hangeth at her breast,
By which men's consciences are searched and drest;
On her coach-wheels, Hypocrisy lies racked;
And squint-eyed Slander with Vain-glory backed,
Her bright eyes burn to dust, in which shines Fate;
An Angel ushers her triumphant gait,
Whilst with her fingers fans of stars she twists,
And with them beats back Error, clad in mists,
Eternal Unity behind her shines,
That Fire and Water, Earth and Air combines;
Her voice is like a trumpet, loud and shrill,
Which bids all sounds in earth and heaven be still."

In that line of work Shakespeare never did a better thing than this. Indeed, in those days many, perhaps most, people of learning and culture thought Ben Jonson the better man of the two;—more instructed (as he doubtless was); with a nicer knowledge of the unities; a nicer knowledge of mere conventionalities of all sorts: Shakespeare was a humble, plain Warwickshire man, with no fine tinsel to his wardrobe — had no university training; not so much schooling or science of any sort as Ben Jonson; had come up to London — as would seem — to make his fortune, to get money — to blaze his way: and how he did it!

I suppose a Duchess of Buckingham or any lady of court consequence would have been rather proud of the obeisance of Ben Jonson, after that play of "Every Man in his Humour," and would have given him a commendatory wave of her fan, much sooner, and more unhesitatingly, than to the Stratford actor, who took the part of Old Knowell in it. Ben believed in conventional laws of speech or of dramatic utterance far more than Shakespeare; he regretted (or perhaps affected to regret when

his jealousies were sleeping), that Will Shakespeare did not shape his language and his methods with a severer art;* he would — very likely — have lashed him, if he had been under him at school, for his irregularities of form and of speech — irregularities that grew out of Shakespeare's domination of the language, and his will and his power to make it, in all subtlest phases, the servant, and not the master of his thought.

Do I seem, then, to be favoring the breakage of customs, and of the rules of particular grammarians? Yes, unhesitatingly — if you have the mastery to do it as Shakespeare did it; that is, if you have that finer sense of the forces and delicacies of language which will enable you to wrest its periods out of the ruts of every-day traffic, and set them to sonorous roll over the open ground, which is broad as humanity and limitless as thought. Parrots

* In his *Discoveries* (*De Shakespeare*) Jonson says, "The players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. . . . . I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry as much as any."

must be taught to prate, particle by particle; but the Bob-o-Lincoln swings himself into his great flood of song as no master can teach him to sing.

Even now we do not bid final adieu to Ben Jonson; but hope to encounter him again in the next reign (that of James I.) through the whole of which he carried his noisy literary mastership.

Some Prose Writers.

You must not believe, because I have kept mainly by poetic writers in these later days of Queen Elizabeth, that there were no men who wrote prose — none who wrote travels, histories, letters of advice; none who wrote stupid, dull, goodish books; alas, there were plenty of them; there always are.

But there were some to be remembered too: there was William Camden — to whom I have briefly alluded already — and of whom, when you read good histories of this and preceding reigns, you will find frequent mention. He was a learned man, and a kind man, excellent antiquarian, and taught Ben Jonson at Westminster School. There

was Stow,* who wrote a *Survey of London*, which he knew from top to bottom. He was born in the centre of it, and as a boy used to fetch milk from a farm at the Minories, to his home in Cornhill, where his father was a tailor. His fulness, his truthfulness, his simplicities, and his quaintness have made his chief book — on London — a much-prized one.

Again there was Hakluyt,† who was a church official over in Bristol, and who compiled *Voyages* of English seamen which are in every well-appointed library. Dr. Robertson says in his *History*, "England is more indebted [to Hakluyt] for its American possessions than to any man of that age." Of so much worth is it to be a good geographer! The "Hakluyt Society" of England will be his enduring monument.

There was also living in those last days of the sixteenth century a strange, conceited, curious travelling man, Thomas Coryat‡ by name, who went

* John Stow, b. 1525; d. 1605. His *Survey* published in 1598: reprinted over and over. Edition of 1876 has illustrations.

† Richard Hakluyt, b. about 1553; d. 1616.

‡ Thomas Coryat, b. 1577; d. 1617. Full title of his book is — *Coryat's Crudities hastily gobbled up in Five moneths*

on foot through Europe, and published (in 1611) what he called — with rare and unwitting pertinence — *Coryat's Crudities.* He affixed to them complimentary mention of himself — whimseys by the poets, even by so great a man as Ben Jonson — a budget of queer, half-flattering, half-ironical rigmarole, which (having plenty of money) he had procured to be written in his favor; and so ushered his book into the world as something worth large notice. He would have made a capital showman. He had some training at Oxford, and won his way by an inflexible persistence into familiarity with men of rank, who made a butt of him. With a certain gift for language he learned Arabic in some one of his long journeyings, was said to have knowledge of Persian, and made an oration in that speech to the Great Mogul — with nothing but language in it. His *Crudities* are rarely read; but some letters and fragments relating to later travels of his, appear in Purchas' *Pilgrims.* He lays hold upon peculiarities and littlenesses of life in his work

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Travells in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia, commonly called the Grisons Country, Helvetia, alias Switzerland, and some parts of Germany and the Netherlands.

which more sensible men would overlook, and which give a certain quaint piquancy to what he told; and we listen, as one might listen to barbers or dressmakers who had just come back from Paris, and would tell us things about cravats and hair-oil and street sights that we could learn no otherwheres. Coryat says:—

"I observe a custom in all those Italian Cities, and tounes thro' the which I passed, that is not used in any other countrie that I saw—nor do I think that any other nation of Christendom doth use it, but only Italy. The Italian and most other strangers that are *cormorant* in Italy doe always at their meales use a little forke, when they cut their meate. For while, with their knife which they hold in one hand they cut the meate out of the dish, they fasten the forke which they hold in their other hand upon the same dish, so that whatsoever he be that sitting in the companie of any others at meale, should unadvisidly touch the dish of meate with his fingers from which alle at the table doe cut, he will give occasion of offence unto the company, as having transgressed the laws of good manners.

"This forme of feeding is, I understand, common in all places of Italy—their forkes being for the most part made of iron or steele, and some of silver—but *these* are used only by gentlemen.

"I myself have thought good to imitate the Italy fashion by this forked cutting of meate not only while I was in Italy, but also in Germany, and oftentimes in England, since I came home."

Thus we may connect the history of silver forks with Tom Coryat's *Crudities*, and with the first reported foot-journeys of an Englishman over the length and breadth of Europe. The wits may have bantered him in Elizabeth's day; but his journeyings were opened and closed under James.

Again, there were books which had a little of humor, and a little of sentiment, with a great deal of fable, and much advice in them; as a sample of which I may name Mr. Leonard Wright's *Displaie of Duties, deck't with sage Sayings, pythie Sentences, and proper Similes: Pleasant to read, delightful to hear, and profitable to practice:** By which singularly inviting title we perceive that he had caught the euphuistic ways of Mr. John Lyly. In enumerating the infelicities of a man who marries a shrew, he says:—

"Hee shall find compact in a little flesh a great number of bones too hard to digest. And therefore some doe thinke wedlocke to be that same purgatorie which some learned divines have so long contended about, or a sharpe penance to bring sinful men to Heaven. A merry fellow hearing a preacher saye in his sermon that whosoever would be

* First published in 1589.

saved must take up and beare his cross, ran straight to his wife, and cast *her* upon his back. . . . Finally, he that will live quietly in wedlock must be courteous in speech, cheerful in countenance, provident for his house, careful to traine up his children in virtue, and patient in bearing the infirmities of his wife. Let all the keys hang at her girdle, only the purse at his own. He must also be voide of jealousy, which is a vanity to think, and more folly to suspect. For eyther it needeth not, or booteth not, and to be jealous without a cause is the next way to have a cause."

"This is the only way to make a woman dum:
To sit and smyle and laugh her out, and not a word but *mum!*"

Quite another style of man was Philip Stubbes,* a Puritan reformer — not to be confounded with John Stubbes who had his right hand cut off, by order of the Queen, for writing against the impropriety and villainy of her prospective marriage with a foreign prince — but a kinsman of his, who wrote wrathily against masques and theatre-going; whipping with his pen all those roystering poets who made dramas or madrigals, all the fine-dressed gallants, and all the fans and ruffs of the women as so many weapons of Satan.

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*Dates of birth and death uncertain. His *Anatomie of Abuses* first published in 1583.

"One arch or piller," says he, "wherewith the Devil's kingdome of great ruffes is under propped, is a certain kind of liquid matter which they call *starch*, wherein the Devil hath learned them to wash and die their ruffes, which, being drie, will stand stiff and inflexible about their neckes."

And he tells a horrific story — as if it were true — about an unfortunate wicked lady, who being invited to a wedding could not get her ruff stiffened and plaited as she wanted; so fell to swearing and tearing, and vowed "that the Devil might have her whenever she wore *neckerchers* again." And the Evil One took her at her word, appearing in the guise of a presentable young man who arranged her ruffs

"— to her so great contentation and liking, that she became enamored with him. The young man kissed her, in the doing whereof he writhed her neck in sunder, so she died miserably; her body being straightwaies changed into blue and black colors, most ugglesome to behold, and her face most deformed and fearful to look upon. This being known in the city great preparation was made for her burial, and a rich coffin was provided, and her fearful body was laid therein. Four men assay'd to lift up the corps, but could not move it. Whereat the standers-by — marvelling causing the coffin to be opened to see the cause thereof, found the body to be taken away, and a blacke catte, very leane and deformed, sitting in the coffin, set-

ting of great ruffes, and frizzling of haire, to the great feare and wonder of all the beholders."

We do not preach in just that way against fashionable dressing in our time.

A book on the *Arte of English Poesie* belongs to those days — supposed to be the work of George Puttenham* — written for the "recreation and service" of the Queen; it has much good counsel in it — specially in its latter part; and the author says he wrote it to "help the gentlewomen of the Court to write good Poetry." As an exampler, under his discussion of "Ornament," he cites what he graciously calls a "sweet and sententious ditty" from the Queen's own hand. The reader will be curious perhaps to see some portion of this:—

"The doubt of future foes, exiles my present joy,
And wit me warnes to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy,
For falsehood now doth flow, and subject faith doth ebbe,
Which would not be, if reason rul'd, or wisdome wev'd the webbe."

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* George Puttenham, b. about 1532: the book printed 1589.

This much will serve for our republican delectation; but it is not the only instance in which we find mention of her Majesty's dalliance with verse: In an old book called the *Garden of the Muses*, of the date of 1600, the author says the flowers are gathered out of many excellent speeches spoken to her Majesty at triumphs, masques, and shows, as also out of divers choice ditties sung to her; and "some especially proceeding from her own most sacred selfe." No one of them, however, would have ranked her with any of the poets of whom we have made particular mention; but for fine, clear, nervous, masculine English, to put into a letter, or into a despatch, or into a closet scolding, I suspect she would have held rank with any of them.

If not a poet, she led poets into gracious ways of speech. Her culture, her clear perceptions, her love of pageants even, her intolerance of all forms of dulness or slowness, her very vanities — were all of them stimulants to those who could put glowing thought into musical language. Her high ruff, her jewelled corsage, her flashing eye, her swift impulses, her perils, her triumphs, her

audacities, her maidenhood — all drew flatteries that heaped themselves in songs and sonnets. So live a woman and so live a Queen magnetized dulness into speech.

The Queen's Progresses.

I spoke but now of her love of pageants; every visiting prince from every great neighbor kingdom was honored with a pageant; every foreign suitor to her maidenly graces — whether looked on with favor or disfavor (as to which her eye and lip told no tales) — brought gala-days to London streets — brought revels, and bear-baitings, and high passages of arms, and swaying of pennons and welcoming odes. Many and many a time the roystering poets I named to you — the Greenes, the Marlowes, the Jonsons, the Peeles, may have looked out from the Mermaid Tavern windows upon the royal processions that swept with gold-cloth, and crimson housings through Cheapside, where every house blazed with welcoming banners, and every casement was crowded with the faces of the onlookers.

Thereby, too, she would very likely have passed in her famous "Progresses" to her good friends in the eastern counties; or to her loved Lord Burleigh, or to Cecil, at their fine place of Theobalds' Park,* near Waltham Cross. True, old Burleigh was wont to complain that her Majesty made him frequent visits, and that everyone cost him a matter of two or three thousand pounds. Indeed it was no small affair to take in the Queen with her attendants. Hospitable people of our day are sometimes taken aback by an easy-going friend who comes suddenly on a visit with a wife, and four or five children, and Saratoga trunks, and two or three nursery-maids, and a few poodles and a fox-terrier; but think of the Queen, with her tiring-women, and her ladies of the chamber, and her ushers, and her grand falconer, and her master of the hounds, and her flesher — who knows the cuts she likes — and her cook, and her secretary, and her fifty yeomen of the guard, and her sumpter mules, and her chaplain, and her laundry-women, and her fine-

* Nichols, in his *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, vol. i. (Preface), says: "She was twelve times at Theobalds, which was a very convenient distance from London, . . .

starchers! No wonder Lord Burleigh groaned when he received a little notelet from his dear Queen saying she was coming down upon him—for a week or ten days.

And Elizabeth loved these little surprises overmuch, and the progress along the high roads thither and back, which so fed her vanities: She was a woman of thrift withal, and loved her savings; and the kitchen fires at Nonsuch palace, or at Greenwich or at Richmond, might go out for a time while she was away upon these junketings.

I know that my young readers will be snuggling in their minds a memory of that greatest Progress of hers, and that grandest of all private entertainments—at Kenilworth Castle; wondering, maybe, if that charming, yet over-sad story of Walter Scott's is true to the very life? And inasmuch as they will be devouring that book, I suspect, a great deal oftener than they will read Laneham's account of the great entertainment, or Gascoigne's,* I will

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the Queen lying there at his Lordship's charge, sometimes three weeks, or a month, or six weeks together."

* George Gascoigne (b. 1530; d. 1577) published a tract, in those days, entitled *The Princely Pleasures* of *Kenelworth*

tell them how much, and where it varies from the true record. There *was* a Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester — a brilliant man, elegant in speech, in person, in manner — at a court where his nephew Philip Sidney had shone — altogether such a courtier as Scott has painted him: And the Queen had regarded him tenderly — so tenderly that it became the talk of her household and of the world. It is certain, too, that Leicester gave to the Queen a magnificent entertainment at his princely castle of Kenilworth, in the month of July, 1575. There were giants, there were Tritons, there were floating islands. Lawns were turned into lakes, and lakes were bridged with huge structures, roofed with crimson canopies, where fairies greeted the great guest with cornucopias of flowers and fruits. There was fairy music too; there were dances and plays and fireworks, that lighted all the region round about with a blaze of burning darts, and streams and hail of fire-sparks.

In all this there is no exaggeration in Scott's

Castle, which appears in Nichol's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth;* as does also Laneham's Account of the *Queen's Entertainment at Killingworth* [sic] *Castle.*

picturing; none either in his portraiture of the coquetries and princely graces of the Queen. It is probable that no juster and truer picture of her aspect and bearing, and of the more salient points of her character ever will or can be drawn.

Thither, too, had come — from all the country round — yeomen, strolling players, adventurous youths, quick to look admiringly after that brilliant type of knighthood Sir Philip Sidney, then in his twenty-first year, and showing his gay trappings in the royal retinue: amongst such youths were, very likely, Michael Drayton and William Shakespeare, boys both in that day, just turned of eleven, and making light of the ten or twelve miles of open and beautiful country which lay between Kenilworth and their homes of Atherstone and of Stratford-upon-Avon.

It is true too, that Leicester, so admired of the Queen, and who was her host, had once married an Amy Robsart: true, too, that this Amy Robsart had died in a strangely sudden way at an old manor-house of Cumnor; and true that a certain Foster and Varney, who were dependants of Leicester, did in some sense have her in their keeping. But —

and here the divergence from history begins — this poor Amy Robsart had been married to Sir Robert Dudley before he came to the title of Leicester, and she died in the mysterious way alluded to, some fifteen years before these revels of Kenilworth: but not before Elizabeth had been attracted by the proud and noble bearing of Robert Dudley. Her fondness for him began about the year 1559. And it was this early fondness of hers which gave color to the story that he had secretly caused the death of Amy Robsart. The real truth will probably never be known: there was a public inquiry (not so full, he said, as he could have wished) which acquitted Leicester; but his character was such that he never outlived suspicion. I observe that Mr. Motley, in his *History of the United Netherlands*, on the faith of a paper in the Record Office, avers Leicester's innocence; but the tenor of a life counts for more than one justifying document in measuring a man's moral make-up.

In the year 1575, when the revels of Kenilworth occurred, the Earl of Leicester was a widower and Amy Robsart had been ten years mouldering in her grave: but in the year 1576 the young Countess of

Essex suddenly became a widow, and was married privately, very shortly afterward, to the Earl of Leicester. In the next year, 1577, the story was blazed abroad, and the Queen showed her appreciation of the sudden match by sending Leicester straight to the Tower. But she forgave him presently. And out of these scattered actualities, as regards the Earl, Sir Walter Scott has embroidered his delightful romance.

But we have already brought our literary mention up to a point far beyond this in the Queen's life; up to a point where Shakespeare, instead of tearing over hedgerows and meadows to see the Tritons and the harlequins of Kenilworth, has put his own Tritons to swimming in limpid verse, and has put his bloated, dying Falstaff to "babbling o' green fields." The Queen, too, who has listened — besides these revels — to the tender music of Spenser and outlived him; who has heard the gracious courtliness of Sidney, and outlived him; who has lent a willing ear to the young flatteries of Raleigh and seen him ripen into a gray-haired adventurer of the seas; who has watched the future Lord Keeper, Francis Bacon, as he has shot

up from boyhood into the stateliness of middle age; who has seen the worshipful Master John Lyly grow up, and chant his euphuism and sing his songs and die: she too, now, is feeling the years — brilliant as they may be in achievement — count and weigh upon her.

Long as she could, she cherished all the illusions of youth. That poor old face of hers was, I suspect, whited and reddened with other pigments than what the blood made, as the years went by. Such out-of-door sports as bear-baiting became rarer and rarer with her; and she loved better such fun as the fat Falstaff made, in her theatre of Whitehall. But only nicest observers saw the change; and she never admitted it — perhaps not to herself.

The gossiping Paul Hentzner, who had an ambassador's chances of observation, says of her, on her way to chapel at Greenwich: —

"Next came the Queen, in her sixty-fifth year, as we are told — very majestic: her face, oblong, fair but wrinkled; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant; her nose a little hooked. She had in her ears two pearls with very rich drops; and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels. She was dressed in white silk bordered with pearls of

the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk shot with silver threads."

This, observe, was over twenty years after the revels of Kenilworth: and two years beyond this date, when the Queen was sixty-seven, a courtier writes: "Her Majesty is well, and every second day is on horseback." No suitor could say a pleasanter thing to her than—"Your majesty is looking very young!" She danced, when it made her old bones ache to dance.

No suitor could say a more inapt thing than to express a fear that a revel, or a play, or a hunt, or a dance might possibly fatigue her Majesty. It would bring a warning shake of the head that made the jewels rattle.

But at last the days come — as like days are coming to us all — when she can counterfeit youth no longer. The plays entice her no more. The three thousand court dresses that she left, hang unused in her wardrobe: weaknesses hem her in, turn which way she may. Cecil, the son of her old favorite Burleigh, urges that she must quit her chair — which she clung to, propped with pillows — that she *must* take to her bed. "*Must*," she cries, with

a kindling of her old passionate life, "little man, little man, thy father never dared to use such a word to his Queen." The gust passes; and she clings to life, as all do, who have such fast, hard grip upon it. In short periods of languor and repose, taking kindly to the issue — going out, as it were, like a lamp. Then, by some windy burst of passion — of hate, flaming up red and white and hot — her voice a scream, her boding of the end a craze, her tenacity of purpose dragging all friends, all hopes, all the world to the terrible edge where she stands — the edge where Essex stood (she bethinks herself with a wild tempest of tears) — the edge where Marie Stuart stood at Fotheringay, in her comely widow's dress; thinks of this with a shrug that means acquiescence, that means stubborn recognition of a fatal duty: *that* ghost does no way disturb her.

But there are others which well may. Shall we tell them over?

No; let us leave her with her confessor, saying prayers maybe; her rings on her fingers; the lace upon her pillow; not forgetting certain fine coquetries to the last: strong-souled, keen-thoughted, am-

bitious, proud, vindictive, passionate woman, with her streaks of tenderness out of which bitter tears flowed — out of which kindlinesses crept to sun themselves, but were quick overshadowed by her pride.

Farewell to her!

In our next talk we shall meet a King — but a King who is less a man than this Queen who is dead.

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